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Galileo Magazine of Science and Fiction is published bimonthly in January, March, May, July, September, and November, at 339 Newbury Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02115. Single copy price: \$1.50. Subscriptions: \$7.50 for 6 issues, \$12 for 12 issues. This issue published March 1978. All characters and settings contained in stories are purely fiction. The factual accuracy of non-fiction articles is the responsibility of the author. No responsibility is assumed for unsolicited manuscripts, but all submissions are welcome, no query necessary. All submissions should contain a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Application to mail at second-class postage rates is pending at Boston, Massachusetts, and at additional mailing offices. Advertising rates available on request. Copyright 1978 © by Galileo Magazine, Inc.

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Our Cover

Good covers are hard to come by. The opportunity to run a cover by John Schoenherr was asking the impossible. Here, with our compliments, is a bit of the impossible.

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NOW YOU SEE THEM AND NOW YOU DON'T



Editorial

Charles C. Ryan

Chunging writes history is easy when printing is controlled by the State. In the previously published picture at left, Chairman Mao Tse-tung is shown in 1958 doing some ceremonial digging at a reservoir near Peking. Beside him is Peng Chen, who was then mayor of Peking. Mao's wife, Chiang Ching, is at left behind the soldier. The same photo was published in the Peking Review when Mao died—but with some alterations:

"Since the general civilization of mankind I believe there are more instances of the abridgement of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations."

—James Madison

THE RESIDENTS of New York can take extreme comfort in the knowledge that our bureaucrats always keep them well advised of any potential dangers. The advance warnings dispersed on the decaying orbit of the nuclear powered Russian spy satellite, *Cosmos 954*, certainly gave them ample time to evacuate its possible impact site. The Canadian residents of Yellowknife must be equally reassured—after all, they were informed a good two to three hours after the crash, weren't they?

U.S. tracking stations picked up evidence of the satellite's decaying orbit in mid-December and in early January it was known that New York, among other locations, was a possible impact site. The fact that no public warnings were issued is a prime example of how we have allowed bureaucracies to erode out freedom to the point where it is an actual physical danger.

The function of the bureaucratic protagonist in George Orwell's *1984* was to re-write news and history so that it was the "right" consistency of pabulum before being given to the people for gunning purposes. As a synopsis of the totalitarian state, the novel offers insights on what we can do now to avoid letting it become more than an ugly

cliche.

The recent Senate and House Intelligence Committee hearings, similar hearings on the Vietnam War, Watergate and other exposes in the last several years clearly show us the very bureaucracies which maintain they are acting in our best interest have, instead, often lied while doing otherwise. What is even more dismaying (actually, we do expect government officials to lie, don't we?) is the fact that in many instances they have sat tight on information vital to making intelligent decisions on the issues before us.

Though the examples of misrepresentation are numerous beyond listing, some samples are in order.

The Pentagon and CIA consistently lied and misrepresented the facts of the Vietnam War, from simple statistics like body counts to more serious matters such as pending offensives and the effectiveness of SAC air strikes—creating a public attitude which altered radically when the truth became known. Think of the thousands of American and Vietnamese lives lost or maimed as a result of those lies!

The CIA, FBI, and NSA have regularly bugged, burglarized and spied on innocent citizens with the flimsiest of "security" excuses. It hasn't stopped there: there was a "test" of the vectoring of biological weapons carried out in New York subways; unknowing employees were the subjects of LSD, and other experiments; and numerous organizations were "infiltrated" for intelligence-gathering purposes. Then there are the assassination plots, the monkeying with

democratic elections abroad, and other international maneuverings.

Our technological ability to invade individual privacy has already outstripped that prophesized by Orwell's novel. It would probably be naive to assume that the cameras on board Lockheed's "Big Bird" spy satellite or the SR-71 spy plane shut down while overflying U.S. territory. With computer enhancement, the number on your license plate or a toy left in the back yard by your child can be easily identified by these marvels. Microwave and other listening devices, light intensifiers and telescopic lenses can turn a romantic walk down a country lane on a moonless night into something as observable as a performance on a spotlighted stage. And those are just the devices we've been told about.

While there has been a recent reorganization of the nation's intelligence agencies, the real issue is that those entrusted to oversee the spies are too often duped. Despite all the glamour focused on elected officials, it is actually the bureaucrats who run this nation. No one elects them and Civil Service sees to it that they are rarely canned for failing to do their job—or for being too diligent at it.

Watergate showed that our political bureaucracies will often use extreme measures to insure their own perpetuation, so we can hardly expect any better from lesser beings who have such fine examples to follow. Rather than being "public servants," bureaucrats are more frequently enforcers, regulators, and petty dictators who see themselves

[Continued on page 8]

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Pro-File

Our Authors

Clockwise: Kevin O'Donnell Jr., Connie Willis, Mark McGarry, and Patrick McGuire.

HERE IS a little something about the folks whose work makes up *Galileo* Seven.

Brian Aldiss describes himself merely as a "writer who flourished in the sixties, who was once a Buddhist lumberjack but now has a large family and thirty-two cats." That is correct, if modest. Mr. Aldiss was voted Britain's most popular sf author in 1969, and the following year received the Ditmar Award as the world's best contemporary sf writer: he has also won both the Hugo and Nebula awards. His most recent book, just published in January, is titled *Brothers of the Head*. In this issue, he gives us "Non-Isotropic," which goes in some fascinating (and provocative) directions, but we won't say what—you'll have to read it for yourself.

"Do Not Go Gentle..." has an interesting history. Author **Kevin O'Donnell, Jr.** was assigned to write a story from the point of view of someone of the opposite sex; he claims he "ranted and raved about what a terrific pain" it would be, but his classmates, who were crazy about the idea, voted him down. At the next class meeting, however, O'Donnell was the only one who had come up with a story at all; he guesses that having it published is adequate revenge. Mr. O'Donnell has also recently sold a novel titled "Passport to My Soul" to Bantam; it will be published in 1978.

Connie Willis loves screwball comedies, and wishes "they would come back and devour Clint Eastwood and Burt Reynolds and their CB radios;" "Capra Corn" is her contribution to the

cause. Ms. Willis has been writing "since the standard high school movie star story;" she has published all kinds of work, though, she says, her "first love is the science fiction short story, which has always been and will always be better than the science fiction novel." Presently she is collaborating on a science fiction Gothic with Cynthia Felice, and the two suspect they may have invented a new genre. The product, at any rate, should prove interesting.

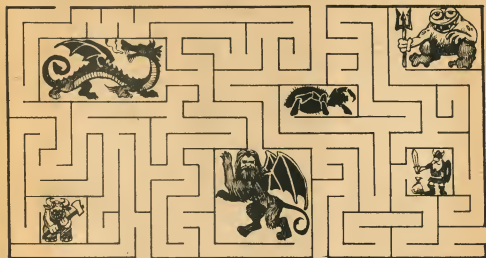
Bill Boggess was raised in Tennessee, schooled in Chicago, and now resides in Ft. Lauderdale. When asked which of his accomplishments make him most proud, he gave two: he once sold a cover to *MAD Magazine*, and has skippered a charter sailboat in the Virgin Islands. Besides writing sf—he is currently at

work on a novel—Mr. Boggess works in advertising. We were curious to know of any particular source for his story in this issue, "Evasion;" he replied simply, "April 15. Taxes."

Mark McGarry was born in 1958, which makes him one of SFWA's youngest members. He was "drafted into college, and is currently serving out his first tour of duty, writing sf short stories and novels for credit." With "Loss of Signal" he makes his *Galileo* debut; he adds, though, that he has "sold fiction in the past and intends to do it in the future." Mr. McGarry is also the editor of *Empire SF*, a fanzine for young sf writers. His literary ambition is quite simply "to write whatever he likes well enough so that he will be paid a sum sufficient to allow him to live, and continue writing what he likes."



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Our poet this issue is none other than **Ray Bradbury**. Poetry is, it seems, becoming the current genre of choice for Mr. Bradbury: his first collection was published in 1973, his second just last year. (This latest, *Where Robot Mice and Robot Men Run Round in Robot Towns*, was reviewed in *Galileo* Six.) Critics have long cited Bradbury as the "most literary" of sf writers, so perhaps the turn to poetry bears them out. Or perhaps we should not be surprised when Ray Bradbury does something new, and does it well.

It would be hard to find someone more qualified than **Patrick McGuire** to write "Understanding the Strugatskys." He holds a Ph.D. from Princeton in Political Science; his dissertation is about the political aspects of Soviet science fiction. He speaks Russian "more or less fluently;" and has traveled extensively in the USSR. He explains: "I was in Moscow in 1974-75 as a Fulbright scholar; according to the exchange treaty, American scholars in the USSR get stipends in rubles, which you can't take out of the country. It is a non-trivial task to find anything worth buying with rubles that isn't already sold out." The best option seemed to travel; the result is that Mr. McGuire has "been within two hundred miles of the Chinese border, but never west of Iowa." He adds, "Almost without exception, by the way, Soviet sf sells out instantly, and you can never find it in bookstores...The best way an American can get it is to trade, with people who have connections, for Western sf."

Coincidentally, it was Patrick McGuire

with whom **Sandra Miesel** won the Most Beautiful Costume Award at Torcon. (He claims that it was mostly her doing, that he "was just the clothes-dummy.") Whatever the case, Sandra Miesel's experience in the world of sf is extensive. Three times she has been nominated for the Hugo Award as Best Fanwriter; she has published studies of Poul Anderson and Gordon Dickson, and is currently at work on her first novel. Her article in issue Seven focuses on **John Schoenherr**, whom we are delighted to have as our cover artist. (A note: the picture on the cover is part of his original portfolio, the one which he took to New York when first looking for work as an sf artist.) Besides her sf work, Ms. Miesel boasts a husband, three children, and two master's degrees—one in biochemistry, and the other in medieval history.

Justin Leibler is quite literally a child of sf: he is the son of Fritz Leibler. But he is no shrinking violet stuck in the shadow of a famous parent. He has a Ph.D. in philosophy with degrees from the University of Chicago and Oxford. He has published three books, and sends of articles, reviews, and papers. Furthermore, a glance at the list persuades one that Mr. Leibler's attentions are not rigidly confined by his field; a sense of whimsy, creeps through. "Talking with Extraterrestrials" was first read to the Boston Colloquium; another paper title that catches the eye is "Games, Genre, and the Espionage Novel," which he presented to the American Philosophical Association. Presently he is a visiting scientist in the Department of

Linguistics and Philosophy at MIT.

Our serialization of "The Masters of Solitude" continues in this issue with the third (penultimate) installment, but authors **Kaye** and **Godwin** deserve a break from having to talk about themselves and their *magnum opus*. So if you're curious, check issues Five and Six for the information. It still stands.

—G—

[Continued from page 4]

Editorial

as the interpreters and arbiters of the laws legislators write.

When it comes to maintaining a free flow of information, the public needs to know, or even might like to know, equivocation, dissembling, and "bureaucratise" are the rule. This isn't just a problem at the national level, it occurs in just about every city, town and burg in the United States. Newspaper reporters in your own town, for instance, often meet this bureaucratic evasiveness on matters large and small. In many instances, they have had to threaten to file lawsuits to gain access to public records and the almost continual refrain from the bureaucrats is, "That's not public information." If it isn't, what are they doing with it?

It all reduces to the question of whether or not we should trust these bureaucrats with such a large control over our lives. For the answer, it might provide a lesson to look at one of the worst offenders at violating individual rights—the IRS. The IRS offers to help taxpayers file their returns, but it refuses to honor the accuracy or reliability of a tax return made out by one of its own agents. Why should we trust bureaucrats, when they don't trust themselves?

Like the crab that burrows in the sand, these agencies move sideways—not to advance civilization, but to protect themselves—all the while thrusting their pincers up and on guard against a frontal assault which may never come.

Bureaucracies like things to be organized, under control, systematic and regulated and the more of that philosophy they follow, the closer we inch toward Orwell's nightmare. It's a shame they can't live with the fact that the best solution for the problems of democracy is more democracy.

[To Be Continued]

Authors / Editorial

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Chess players and science-fiction readers have much in common. Witness the cartoon which appeared on the cover of our June issue. Ten years ago the possibility of a computer playing high-level chess was scoffed at. In 1977, a computer program achieved an official Class A rating from the United States Chess Federation.

Perhaps as a sci-fi reader or someone interested in the most imaginative aspects of science, you are a chess player too. If so, you have probably toyed with the idea of improving your game, challenging your problem-solving abilities, or just reading about what is currently going on in the world of chess.

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Understanding The Strugatsky Brothers

Patrick L. McGuire

IT LOOKS like the Strugatsky brothers Arkady and Boris have at long last made it in the English-speaking world. The trickle of translations which has been appearing in English for the last fifteen years is now turning into a flood. Three Strugatsky books have appeared in English in the last few months alone—*Roadside Picnic/The Tale of the Troika* (Macmillan, \$8.95), *Prisoners of Power* (Macmillan, \$9.95), and *Monday Begins on Saturday* (DAW, \$1.75). And more are scheduled for the near future.

It's damn well about time, too. The Strugatsky brothers are easily the best writers of fantasy and science fiction in the Soviet Union today, and have been so for almost two decades. Their popularity is not restricted to the usual audience for science fiction, either—it extends to the whole literate public, in a manner approximated in this country only by Ray Bradbury and Kurt Vonnegut. Yet while Bradbury and Vonnegut lost much of the regular science-fiction audience in reaching out to a general readership, the Strugatsky brothers (when they want to) can write superb science fiction by Isaac Asimov's standards as easily as by Harlan Ellison's.

Being a writer, especially a very popular writer, means different things in the Soviet Union and in the United States. In the Soviet Union, there is somewhat less money but considerably more prestige—for over a century, Russian writers have been expected to be philosophers and moralists, to provide a complete vision of how life should be lived. It means more of a

chance to influence the lives of others, but also a much greater risk of darkening one's own life by offending people in power. Anyone can enjoy the Strugatskys without knowing much of anything about the Soviet Union or Soviet sf, but I think knowledge of these areas helps, just as it's useful to know something about Roman Catholicism before reading *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. Accordingly, in this article I am going to concentrate on aspects of the Strugatskys that I think the reader unfamiliar with the Soviet Union would be less likely to figure out for himself. This does not always mean I think these aspects are the most important ones. On the contrary, the Strugatskys are writers with instant universal appeal. But the more general and more purely literary aspects of their production can be safely left to the readers, or to critics such as Theodore Sturgeon, who has supplied both Macmillan volumes with perceptive introductions.

In their critical writings, the Strugatsky brothers are reluctant to regard science fiction as anything distinct from fantasy in general, and the amount of "hard science" content in their production varies greatly from work to work. But well over half of this output can be classified at least approximately as science fiction.

In turn, the majority of this science fiction fits together into a single more or less consistent future history, with recurring characters and a picture of gradual historical development. In it we follow political and social development on Earth, the expansion of humanity through the Solar System, to the stars,

and in the end the return of attention inward at least for a while, inward to the question of remaking *homo sapiens* himself. We see the discovery and first tentative contact with extraterrestrials, and eventually intimate association with them. We follow characters recurring in various stories throughout their careers, and watch their psychologies unfold and alter. We follow the change of slang, dress, and eventually language throughout the years.

But while Heinlein or Niven or LeGuin or Anderson have had to work out the courses of their respective future histories themselves, the Strugatsky brothers have had "collaboration." Censorship requires that any work of Soviet science fiction conform to the pronouncements of the Communist Party concerning what the future will be like, pronouncements based chiefly on interpretations of the writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. For Soviet science fiction, the most important Party teachings are those regarding the transition of all countries to the "socialism" currently enjoyed by the Communist countries, and then the transition of the "socialist" countries to "full communism."

For what we call the "Communist" world calls itself the "socialist" world, and sees itself as merely on the road to real, small-c communism. According to most interpretations, full communism will be possible only after the entire world has been absorbed into the Soviet bloc, so that defense expenditures and military discipline can be done away with, and a world-wide economic system can be set up. This consolidation

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Photo courtesy of Donald A. Wollheim

process will not necessarily be violent: nuclear weapons make conflict too insanely dangerous even for war-mongering capitalists. Economic crisis and pressure from the Third World abroad and the working class at home are likely to force the ruling class to recognize the inevitable and surrender power peacefully. It may even be expedient for Communists simply to buy out the last survivors.

The "communism" which will then come into full flower will differ from the "highly developed socialism" of the contemporary Soviet Union (itself in turn the most socially advanced country in the world today) in a number of respects. The most important of these are (1) the "withering away" of government in the usual sense of the word, and the more or less simulta-

neous disappearance of the Communist Party (since the whole population will consist of good Communists); (2) the abolition of money or any other system for rationing material goods ("material abundance" provided by technology will mean that there is more than enough of everything to go around, and people will be raised so that they have the sense not to take more than they really want); (3) the virtual end of crime (since all its social or medical causes will be corrected); and finally (4) the gradual creation of a single harmonious world-wide culture with a single language (an artificial one or one evolving naturally, but not Russian).

In short, it is the official position of the Soviet regime that within less than a century the whole world will be well on the way to something closely re-

sembling utopia. How much of this do Party leaders or non-Party intellectuals actually believe? The question is frequently debated in the West. The best answer seems to be that they believe some of it, but not all. To censors and editors and critics, however, the question is immaterial. The whole reason for the existence of the Communist Party is to act as a midwife for the new era, and consequently the certainty of the era's arrival can never be questioned. That is the line, and the sf writer had better stick to it.

This obviously presents him with certain problems. Most science fiction is set in the future, and in a future so perfect as this, where is the dramatic conflict going to come from? There can be no cops-and-robbers and no wars between nations. Even interstellar wars

Of course one difficulty about showing the ethical and economic superiority of Communism this way is that you have to make your Communists ethically and economically superior.

are usually out—if Marxism is a scientific law, then it holds true for extraterrestrials as well, and of course fully communist societies could never come into conflict. Most psychological problems are excluded, too, since they either have social causes which will be abolished, or physiological causes which will be cured. Additional censorship rules create even more difficulties.

HOW COULD anyone write even passable sf—to say nothing of world-class sf—while coping with restrictions such as these? Well, necessity is the mother of invention. The Strugatskys in particular have handled this problem so deftly that it hardly seems to exist. First and most simply, you can set the story far enough in the future for it to be science fiction, but not so far that the world has to be entirely Communist. (The “foreclosure” date is roughly 2050.) This is what the Strugatskys have done in *The Final Circle of Paradise* (which on the basis of other stories can be dated fairly precisely at about 2010), and in “Roadside Picnic” (not part of their main future history, but of course also conforming to Party guidelines).

The high degree of cooperation between Western and Communist countries depicted in both these works is striking. This has been the consistent position of the Strugatsky brothers, even back at the height of the cold war, when Heinlein was writing *World War III* into every book. Soviet censorship finds such a position acceptable, since it is in accord with the Soviet Union’s “peace-loving foreign policy.” But if a writer is going to do without armed conflict, then that is all the more reason, in the censor’s opinion, to wage a spirited “ideological struggle.”

For this reason, even though the conflict in *Final Circle* and “Roadside Picnic” follows the cops-and-robbers formula, the Strugatskys have emphasized that it is really rotten capitalism which makes crime possible in the first place. In particular, the Strugatskys make repeated reference to a Russian

concept called *meshchansvo*. This is commonly, but somewhat misleadingly, translated as “philistinism.” The phrase “looking out for Number One” comes a little closer, I think. *Meshchansvo* denotes a narrow, smug petty-mindedness not simply about culture but about the whole of existence. It is not even far-sighted in its selfishness. *Meshchansvo* is exemplified in *The Final Circle of Paradise* by the rotten hedonism of a capitalist welfare state, and especially by what Larry Niven calls “wire-heading”—direct stimulation of the brain’s pleasure center, a worse addiction than any narcotic. In “Roadside Picnic,” *meshchansvo* is manifested as the petty gangster society in which Redrick Schubart spends his life.

Of course, one difficulty about showing the ethical and economic superiority of Communism this way is that you have to make your Communists ethically and economically superior, something not overwhelmingly obvious in the present-day world. This could be taken as an implied criticism of existing Soviet society. But while Stalin was perfectly prepared to assert that black was white and evil was good, the post-Stalinist regime much prefers simply appearing to be good. Censorship policy is, accordingly, to let such depictions go through and to trust that they will be taken as promises for the future and not criticism of the present.

Another way to make room for dramatic conflict is to set works on alien planets which have not yet gotten to communism, and which are thus free to have wars, intrigues, and crime. Several untranslated Strugatsky stories fall into this class, as do *Hard To Be A God* and *Prisoners of Power*. On one level, both of these books are novels on the tried and true theme of the pros and cons of intervening to uplift the natives of backward planets. On a second level, like most such Western works, they are “really” about intervention in the Third World. But there is also something more profound going on here. The books are about social forces and

personal responsibility.

The original title of *Prisoners of Power* was *Inhabited Island*, which Macmillan evidently decided did not sound science-fictional enough. I think the Strugatskys, who are well-read in Western science fiction, may have been alluding to a line in Heinlein’s *Beyond This Horizon*. Inspector Moran says to Hamilton Felix, “I could set you down on an island peopled by howling savages and dangerous animals—and in two weeks you would own the place.” Maxim Kammerer—brilliant, strong, and practically unkillable, thanks to the bionic or genetic engineering which the Strugatskys take utterly for granted, is every bit as much a superman as Hamilton Felix, but he is much less an *Uebermensch*: the Strugatskys are believers in social forces, not the role of the hero in history. Maxim tries one thing after another without managing to do any good. He comes nowhere close to owning the place. But, almost paradoxically, this does not mean the Strugatskys are any less believers in heroism. When confronted with serious injustice, the decent person is obliged in conscience to act, even though it is overwhelmingly probable that he will not be able to do any good. This contradiction drives Anton in *Hard To Be A God* to a nervous breakdown, and in *Prisoners of Power* it has the younger and more resilient Maxim running around in ineffective circles until, in something of a *deus ex machina* turn of events, he is rescued by an older and wiser agent of the Galactic Security Council.

But there is still another level to these works. The Strugatskys are not writing mere satire or coded political tracts—their imaginary societies have lives of their own—but much in their work has application to current Soviet reality, and to the Stalinism which is past, but which has left such a scar on the Soviet present. In *Hard To Be A God* we see a totalitarian dictatorship in the process of formation. It has done so at an inordinately early point in history, much to the puzzlement of observers from

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The idea for the planet-destroying, robot Berserkers comes from stories written and copyrighted by Fred Saberhagen, and is used with his permission.

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Good men are important, but social and political structures cannot be designed under the assumption that there will always be good people around to run them.

Earth, and the dictatorship contains elements from the Teutonic Knights, the Spanish Inquisition, and tsarist Russia, as well as Hitler and Stalin. Some of the passages in *Hard To Be A God* have very specific application to the Stalinist and even post-Stalinist Soviet Union, but I think perhaps only as one manifestation of the more general phenomenon of totalitarianism.

Prisoners of Power is perhaps more specific. In the background to this novel, a great empire gets into a war. As a result, some outlying provinces win independence, and in the center of the empire the monarchy is overthrown, and replaced by an oppressive oligarchy which maintains itself largely through incessant propaganda, and by oppressing those people who cannot be deluded, either by simply killing them or by packing them off to labor camps. This is the history of the unnamed country ruled by the Creators in *Prisoners of Power*, but it also bears a curious resemblance to the history of the Soviet Union. To be sure, it is a caricature, a heightening of certain features in much the same way that A-lo in LeGuin's *The Dispossessed* is a caricature of the U.S. World War I has been promoted to a nuclear war (incidentally, so far as I know, it is one of only two nuclear wars ever shown, even on other planets, in Soviet sf). A sort of docility generator serves the Creators in place of the Communist Party's unaided agitprop. And once again Nazi features have been intermixed: the "Legion" is more nearly the SS than the KGB.

It will be obvious by now that the Strugatskys have sometimes skated on very thin ice. Moreover, through the 1960's their work was growing more socially conscious at the same time that the Soviet regime was turning somewhat more oppressive. In 1969 it appeared for a while that the Strugatskys would land in serious trouble indeed. In addition to attacks in the press, their names were even removed from the results of a popularity poll in which they had undoubtedly taken first

place (as was clear from an earlier partial report). The worst of this trouble soon blew over, and it could be seen that the Strugatskys had at least some friends in high places—by 1972 they even rated a favorable article and picture in the prestigious *Short Literary Encyclopedia*. But things were no longer quite the same. For the first half of the current decade the Strugatskys found it much more difficult to get published, especially in books (as opposed to magazines), than it should have been for authors of their recognized stature. But in the last couple of years things seem to have improved considerably, and Andrei Tarkovsky, the director who filmed *Solaris*, is now even working on a film based on "Roadside Picnic."

It would appear that the Strugatskys have won their way back to the tolerance of the regime not precisely by backing down, but at least by backing off a little. In large measure, though this is not entirely true, they have moved to less controversial themes. For instance, the Strugatskys have been getting a remarkable amount of wordage out of the platitude that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy. Their technique, like Stanislaw Lem's in *Solaris* and elsewhere, is to introduce some phenomenon which, if not intrinsically unknowable, is at least incomprehensible at the present level of intellectual development, and then to observe the reaction of the characters to this disruption of their lives. This theme appears early in the Strugatskys' work, but it is not brought out onto center stage until such recent stories as "Roadside Picnic" (with its mysterious and powerful alien artifacts which may be no more than the extraterrestrial equivalent of picnic litter), "The Kid," and "A Billion Years to the End of the World" (the latter two so far untranslated). It is not necessarily an apolitical theme—as is clear especially in "Billion Years," which seems "really" to be about the harassment and persecution of dissidents—but the regime seems to

find it preferable to the previous approach.

BESIDES THEIR science fiction, the Strugatskys have written a good deal of fantasy, so far represented in English only by *Monday Begins on Saturday* and its sequel "The Tale of the Troika." The structure of this fantasy owes much less to English-language sources than does the Strugatskys' science fiction. To be sure, the idea of treating magic as a branch of science, and thus deserving of its own research institute, probably derives from American work such as Heinlein's "Magic, Inc." and the whole *Unknown Worlds* school. But look at the difference in development! At the hands of the American writers the idea is driven for all it is worth with relentless if humorous logic. Hell is infiltrated by the FBI. Fairy gold is cursed because it is radioactive, and it is radioactive because it was transmuted and the energy had to go somewhere. With the Strugatskys, logic is summoned up or dismissed at whim. The Strugatskys' chief source here would seem to be Russia's native tradition of grotesque fantasy, as practiced by Gogol or Bely or Bulgakov. In the politicized world of Soviet letters, even the choice of this genre is a political statement. The regime has always looked upon it with at least some disfavor, both because of its distance from orthodox socialist realism and also presumably because of the considerable possibilities for playing allegorical and allusional games with the censor that the genre affords. In his *On Socialist Realism*, the dissident Siniavsky, who was first imprisoned and later exiled from the Soviet Union, indeed suggested that grotesquerie would be the natural successor of socialist realism.

But in *Monday Begins on Saturday*, the Strugatskys have not done anything very "political" beyond whatever is inherent in the adoption of a mild variant of the grotesque-fantasy form. Instead, we have a gentle satire on various aspects of Soviet everyday life.

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and especially on the workings of Soviet scientific research institutes, here represented by SRITS, the Scientific Research Institute of Thaumaturgy and Spellcraft. (In Russian, the acronym is NICHAVO, pronounced the same as *nichego*, nothing.) I can easily believe that to a Russian the book must be hilarious, producing rather the same impression as might a cross between "Magic, Inc." and something by R.A. LaFerry. Things are less simple for an American. There are frequent allusions to aspects of Russian everyday life, and to Russian folklore. Moreover, the English translation is less than satisfactory. Still, the American reader does enjoy some glimpses of Soviet life and of Soviet perceptions of American life. One episode involving a trip to the composite future as seen by American and Soviet sf is particularly good.

The characters are the same in "The Tale of the Troika," but the satire is considerably more barbed, directed at targets such as bureaucratic incompetence and pomposity, Lysenkoism, and graft. This work seems to have hit home only too well, for as far as I know, it has not appeared in book form in the Soviet Union to this day. Its only appearance was in an obscure Siberian magazine in 1968.

In his introduction to *Prisoners of Power*, Theodore Sturgeon says that the Strugatskys have "declared war on the bureaucrats." In one sense he is right, as is particularly clear from the Strugatskys' fantasy. But in another sense he is wrong. The Strugatskys have declared war only on *bad* bureaucrats—their works contain many good ones as well, and the Strugatskys have not presented any institutional alternative to authoritarian bureaucracy. And I don't think this is entirely because of censorship—there is considerable anti-bureaucratic sentiment in the classics of Marxism-Leninism. Several other Soviet sf writers go farther than the Strugatskys in showing social reorganization under full communism which reduces the scope of bureaucracy. But the Strugatskys brothers are like Confucianists: they are more interested in having good men than good laws. They want the bureaucrats to be ethical, understanding, conscientious. Again, like Confucianists, they rely heavily on education to produce the proper sort of personality. In particular they have a confidence in the potential efficacy of the proper sort of boarding-school which would warm the heart of any Old

Elsonian. (One such school is depicted, for example, at the opening of *Hard To Be A God*.) Here, I think, the Strugatskys have failed to read correctly the lessons of history. Good men are important, but social and political structures cannot be designed under the assumption that there will always be good people around to run them.

But this is not of anything like crucial importance. It is not as constitutional theorists that the Strugatskys claim our attention, but as artists, and perhaps also as moralists. In these respects they have few peers and no clear superiors in all of world science fiction.

BUT THAT evaluation has to do with the Strugatskys read in Russian. What Americans actually read are not the words of the Strugatsky brothers, but those of Helen Staltz Jacobson, Antonia Bouis, Wendyane Ackerman, or other translators. And there is something peculiarly difficult about translating science fiction. When, in the 1960's, Soviet publishers started printing American and British sf in quantity, they found they had to recruit an entirely new set of translators before they started getting satisfactory results. People who were perfectly competent at other fiction just couldn't handle sf. American publishers of Soviet science fiction have been running into the same sort of problem.

Difficulties in translation are of two sorts: either the translator doesn't know quite what the author was trying to convey, or he does know, but can't figure out how to get it into English. The first of these is, in practice, less of a problem than one might expect. There are excellent Russian-English dictionaries (though they virtually all translate into British English, which poses occasional obstacles), and as long as you stay alert and look up anything you have the slightest doubt about (idioms and words with multiple meanings lurk everywhere), you'll probably make out all right. Even if you do end up guessing, no one is likely to notice so long as you've made sense. *Solaris*, the first Stanislaw Lem novel to appear in this country, was translated from the French rather than directly from the Polish. This must have resulted in numerous inaccuracies, but at least the translation was smooth, and it brought Lem considerable notice. Similarly, internal evidence (such as the transliteration of names) strongly suggests that the translation of the Strugatskys'

Hard To Be A God was made from the German and not the Russian, and for whatever reason it has numerous inaccuracies. But at least it reads well. When Wendyane Ackerman mistranslates *letoschislennye* and so gives us "the year X of the new era" for "the year X according to the new calendar," she is wrong, but at least she makes sense. Accordingly, the novel was fairly well received in this country.

It's the other sort of difficulty that causes the big problems. The translator knows what the original says, but not exactly—and sometimes not even approximately—how to get it across to the reader. A very sore case in point is Leonid Renen's translation of *Monday Begins on Saturday*; I have serious reservations about it. Renen is completely put out by colloquialisms. He turns something like "Da, chert vozm!" into an overliteral "Yes, devil take it!" instead of the natural, "Yes, damn it." He is an absolute sucker for false cognates—there does exist an English word "exemplar," but when was the last time you ever used it? The proper translation of the Russian *exemplir* is rather "copy" with reference to books, or "specimen" with reference to biological samples and the like.

A few pages of this sort of thing is quite sufficient to start the reader climbing up the walls. *Monday Begins on Saturday* isn't the easiest book in the world for American readers anyhow, filled as it is with allusions to Russian folklore and Soviet bureaucratic organizations and procedures. The clumsy, unnatural language of this translation will probably poison more than one reader against the Strugatskys for life.

And yet the translator has tried, and tried hard. He has added footnotes explaining the most essential of the allusions to folklore. He has translated obsolete or Biblical Russian by obsolete or Biblical English. To the best of his limited facility, he has tried to render rhymed verse for rhymed verse (a duty an astonishing number of translators seem to consider beneath their dignity), and to substitute puns when he cannot translate them. He has run down English originals for quoted chapter headings, and has restored scores of names and bits of quoted English, French, and Latin from the Cyrillic alphabet back to the Latin one. Unlike Antonia Bouis in the sequel, Renen has spelled Cristobal Junta's first name correctly. In short, he has done a lot of work, and the problem resides not in

any lack of diligence, but in the fact that English is obviously not Renen's native language.

Still, his version could have served as the basis for a perfectly adequate translation. It hardly takes a Slavist to know that in English you say "damn it" and not "devil take it," or that books come in copies, not exemplars. This book just needs copy editing by someone who started speaking English by the age of ten. DAW itself may be too much of a skeleton operation to do that much work in house, but surely it would have been easy to pick out some translator on the DAW list and offer him a few hundred dollars to spend a week or two turning the manuscript into real English. Offering this work to the public in its present condition does little to enhance the reputation of the Strugatskys, translator Renen, or DAW.

On the other hand, Macmillan's publicity releases for their Best of Soviet Science Fiction series make a particular point of the translation. It is paid to the quality of translation. In the two Strugatsky volumes which have come out so far, this effort shows. I have objections to both of them, but they are on a much smaller scale than the problems with *Monday Begins on Saturday*. English is, or might as well be, the native language of Antonia Bouis and Helen Staltz Jacobson. They render the Strugatskys' vivid, colloquial Russian into vivid, colloquial English. But neither seems to be entirely at home with a work of science fiction, and this leads to occasional infelicities, especially with names and coinages.

Sometimes, presumably confused by all the terms which are indeed made up, they let something from the Real World slip by them. Bouis fails to recognize the Russian title under which the film *On the Beach* was released in the USSR, and so mistranslates it. Jacobson fails to recognize a real town on a real river in West Germany, and gives us "Gladbach" on the "shore" of the "Nirs" for Galbeck on the bank of the Niers. But more commonly their problem is that they handle people and places in the future and (in the case of Jacobson and *Prisoners of Power*) on alien planets as if they were happening today on Earth.

Abbreviations—ABM, DMZ—are lifted a little too freely from the *New York Times* without sufficient regard either for their precise meaning or for the connotations of the twentieth century which they drag along with them. Both Bouis and Jacobson render the Russian

word for "coverall" as "jumpsuit," thus putting all their characters in tiff height of 1976 fashion. Names are transliterated with no regard for the fact that they are supposedly from alien languages. Jacobson has been using K consistently for the K-sound, but when the aliens decide that "Maxim" is two words and that Maxim's first name is Mak, Jacobson writes it "Mac." The aliens don't think he is Irish, for heaven's sake! On the other hand, one character whose nickname is Pilgrim (or Zander) has this left in Russian in the English text for no obvious reason. Granted, this is the fellow who turns out to be the Earth agent, but he's a German, not a Russian, and in any case does Jacobson suppose he is wandering around incognito but using his own name?

Jacobson also weakens the Great Unmasking Scene, when Maxim catches up to the dazed Pilgrim and hears him mutter something in a terrestrial language. In the Russian version, the Strugatskys had him say it in Russian, but then they realized this lacked immediacy—they were of course using Russian for the extraterrestrial language anyhow. So in the book version they changed it to German, and the shock value is much increased. Here you are, chasing down this alien villain and suddenly he shouts at you in the Real World, "It's a Language in numbers which 'cannot be spoken.'" (Shklovskii and Sagan, *Intelligent Life in the Universe*, p. 428.) Sigh.

But problems such as these are quite minor when spread out over entire long books. You will certainly find fewer such translator-inflicted infelicities here than most American writers inflicted upon themselves. These two translations for the first time give the American reader a fair impression of what the Strugatsky brothers have looked like to the Russians for twenty years. They should go a long way toward establishing the reputation of the Strugatskys in the English-speaking world.

—G—

ALILEO, AS the namesake of a martyr to freedom of inquiry and expression was sympathetic to the plight of Ukrainian writers when we read about it in a recent issue of the Bulletin of the Science Fiction Writers of America. The Ukrainians (specifically, Mykola Rudenko and Oles' Berdnyk) described their problems in a letter which was forwarded to Brian Aldiss by SMOLOS-KYP, the Organization for Defense of Human Rights in the Ukraine, and subsequently published in the Bulletin. (The address of SMOLOS-KYP, for those who wish to contact the organization, is P.O. Box 6066, Patterson Station, Baltimore, MD 21231.) Galileo has decided to publish the letter for the benefit of our readers. Suspecting that the situation may be more complex than it appears to be, however, we asked Patrick McGuire about it. Below are the letter and his comments. Soviet of writers do indeed appear to be persecuted, but McGuire's comments seem to indicate that the persecution is not a general repression of.

Dear Fellow Writers!

We would not wish to bother you with the affairs of distant colleagues; however, our troubles today could well become your troubles tomorrow if the literary world community does not demonstrate strong solidarity.

By now, you have probably heard about the long years of repression of the Ukrainian publicists and authors I. Svitychny, V. Moruz, Y. Sverstsky, V. Stus, V. Chornovil, S. Karavan'sky, and of many other Ukrainians and representatives of other socialist republics.

Presently, the activities of government security organs have entered a new phase: special attention is paid to combating science fiction, works of fantasy that develop the nonconformist consciousness, and those that prompt evolutionary or revolutionary changes. Thus, for example, all books by Oles' Berdnyk (approximately 30 titles) were secretly removed from all libraries and burned in accordance with a special

A Little Bit Pregnant?

"circular." (In what way does this differ from Hitler's "Shabashes" of 1933?) Berdnyk himself was excluded from the Writers' Union five years ago, and placed in cruel and miserable living conditions.

They did the same with the poet and science fiction writer Mykola Rudenko. For many years he had troubled the leading organs of Ukraine and the USSR with suggestions that they examine and consider a series of scientifically based forecasts in areas such as economics and sociology. Criticism of him was not lacking (except for literary criticism). He was expelled from the Party, from the Writers' Union, and became terrorized in all manner of ways.

More than once, our living partners were subjected to searches by members of the KGB (three times in O. Berdnyk's apartment and twice in M. Rudenko's). Literary archives were almost constantly plundered; taken were scores of notebooks with plans for new works, unfinished stories and science fiction novels, tens of thousands of lines of Rudenko's poetry now impossible to recreate, and also a philosophical work entitled "Gnosis and the Present." The works "Holy Ukraine," "An Alternative Evolution," and many more were confiscated from O. Berdnyk.

It is impossible to work creatively expecting cruel and brutal guests any day (or more precisely, night). You, Fellow Writers, have surely never dreamed of such a situation where, in a socialist country, ignorant gendarmes burrow with their dirty paws through the manuscripts of writers and poets; where, upon these poets' dreams of a World of Unity, Humanness and Brotherhood, fall ominous shadows of a merciless present.

Do not consider these facts to be incidental. The situation of science fiction writers is tremendously sad throughout our multicultural nations. For instance, immediately after the death of the celebrated Russian writer I. Efremov, guests from the KGB paid a visit to his widow, conducted a ruthless search, seized many valuable manu-

scripts. For a long time afterward, his name was taboo and subscriptions for a six-volume edition of his works cancelled. Following complaints by other science fiction writers, a three-volume edition was permitted, but his major works, "Time of the Bull," "Spare the Razor," and "Thais of Athens" were deleted from the edition. Many works by the well-known science fiction writers, the brothers Strugatsky, are banned and foreign science fiction is rarely published. The future has become a frightening prospect to the organs of security—in it they sense a threat to their totalitarian rule.

Ah, yes! It is impossible to keep the fire of the mind and heart in the paper labyrinths of vetoes and persecution for long. Prison walls and even death will not check the flight of flaming thought.

Brother writers! Raise a cry of protest against the medieval persecution of literary men. The era of space travel demands free contacts, free thought, the fusion of all creative efforts, to build a unified World of Joy and Love!

We await your words of support. The situation is fearsome!

Mykola Rudenko
Oles' Berdnyk
5 January 1977
Kiev, Ukraine

Patrick McGuire comments:

I hadn't heard of the KGB search of Efremov's apartment, but it doesn't particularly surprise me. Efremov was pretty free-thinking, and smuggled a lot of stuff into his books, especially *The Hour of the Bull*. He was prominent as both a paleontologist and a writer, and I suppose they didn't want to cause a commotion while he was alive, but took advantage of his death. *The Hour of the Bull* is an anti-utopia which is superficially anti-Chinese and anti-American, but which on closer examination turns out to be anti-Stalinist and anti-neo-Stalinist. It seemed to take quite a while for the regime to catch onto this, but it has now become pretty much an unbook. At the same time, Rudenko and

Berdnyk exaggerate when they say that "for a long time afterward his name was taboo." He died in 1972 and when I got to Moscow in 1974 he was being discussed freely enough. It was just his later work, and *Hour of the Bull* in particular, which was down-played. *Hour*, for instance, is listed in a 1975 bibliography of Soviet sf, but is completely passed over in discussion. Similarly, there have been at least a couple highly laudatory articles on Efremov in the past year on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of his birth, but none of these mentions *Hour*.

The only Strugatsky book to be flat-out banned, so far as I know, was *The Ugly Swans*, which I think is scheduled for American publication by DAW. That book was published originally by an emigre house in West Germany. Other works have been heavily edited, and have not been able to achieve book publication. Current Strugatsky strategy seems to be to get back into the regime's graces, so I'm not sure how kindly they would regard older agitation.

The Soviet regime in general is certainly not at present engaging in any total repression of sf, though it may be tightening the screws a little bit—for the past several years there has been pressure to set stories closer to home, not far off in space somewhere. Foreign sf is printed very selectively in the USSR, but it can't be called "rarely published" as Rudenko and Berdnyk do. At least a lot more English language sf has appeared over here. I see no reason to believe the information regarding the Ukraine is incorrect, however, and Rudenko and Berdnyk would seem to be in sufficient hot water themselves that international attention would be more likely to help than hurt. If you want my advice, print the letter, but with a little bit of explanation.

—G—

Extraterrestrial Translation

Justin Leiber

AS EVERYONE else, I had a stark, Kafkaesque, unchildlike time when I was a kid. I sat around with the other kids discussing things like whether we would rather be deaf or blind, have leukemia or hemophilia, or how we might get away with killing our parents, and so on. I can still remember my eleven-year-old friend, Bill Altman, saying to hell with being President, he wanted to be a prison warden—that's what being a kid is really like.

Still, there were the stars and non-humiliation to dream of. I remember maintaining that I would give an arm to go to the moon. I guess I still would make the offer. But now I'd give a lot more to meet and talk to an extraterrestrial. And not the least because of what such an encounter might teach me about human beings, about psychology and linguistics. Fortunately, I don't think that the price of my arm will be charged. More fortunately, you can achieve some of the desirable effects by just thinking about what would happen in meeting extraterrestrials: in particular, by thinking about what would be needed in managing translation between an extraterrestrial and human language.*

I ask my class in philosophy and linguistics to consider the following levels in "radical translation." The idea is to imagine—construct a coherent story—how you, an English speaker, would set about achieving a reasonably full range of communication in the following situations:

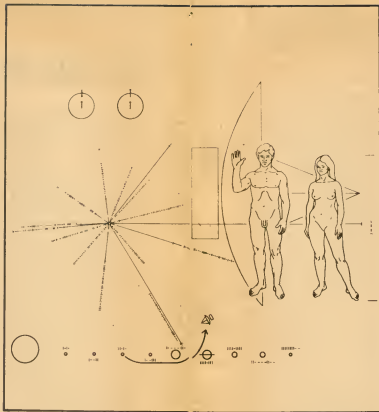
(1) The aliens are just plain hu-

mans who speak XYZ and have no familiarity with English or any language you know. To make matters concrete, imagine we have dug up another isolated tribe in the jungles of Borneo.

(2) The aliens are (intelligent) terrestrials who speak ABC. They are roughly like us. They see, hear, feel, and so on. And their senses cover about the same range as ours. For example, they don't see X-rays or feel magnetic fields any more than we do. But we do not suppose that they conceptualize like us. (If you make them too much like us, you just get case (1)—the aliens are just a little further away than Borneo. This is what happens in naive or "human-chauvinist-pig" science fiction.)

(3) The aliens are (intelligent) extraterrestrials who speak EFG. They are not even roughly like us. Their senses do not pick up any of our visual or auditory ranges. Their communication methods do not depend on any senses that we could call hearing or seeing, Touch, smell, taste, and so on are possible means.

What I propose to do now is to comment on what the possibility of translation would require in each of these situations, starting with (1).



BUT FIRST, just to give you an idea of where we are going, I want to explain why I had to rule out one extremely easy answer to the question *How could we achieve communication in case (3)?* The easy answer is that there might be no problem communicating with aliens under case (3); we will just communicate telepathically.

What is the problem with saying we'll just communicate telepathically? Kimball Kenison, the "gray lensman" of E.E. Smith's grandest space opera, used to do that sort of thing all the time no matter how reptilian or bug-eyed the opposition. Kimball just took their minds over, read their thoughts and memories, ordered them about and so on. Once he telepathically ordered a tiny bug to switch off the "thought

screen" of a particularly evil alien, subsequently telling this bug the way to some choice larvae ("Lensesman always pay their debts"). So what's the problem with saying we'll just communicate telepathically?

Imagine that you speak English and nothing else, and you want to communicate with Josef, a native of Borneo who speaks only XYZ. We give Josef telepathy. That is, he gets to "look" inside your mind and put whatever he wants in there. You think very clearly "I want to communicate with you," and Josef puts himself inside your mind. If you are like me, when you try to put a thought very clearly, you get both a printed version in the "mind's eye" and a simultaneous spoken version for what we'll call the "mind's ear." But both versions are clearly in English. So when

Josef "gets inside" your head, it doesn't help! Josef "sees" and "hears" sentences of English: it doesn't matter whether he "sees" and "hears" it in your head or outside. Similarly, imagine that you think " $2 + 2 = 4$ " while Josef is in your mind. He won't understand what the symbols mean. So you think " $II + II = IV$ " or " $10 + 10 = 100$," using Roman and binary notation. Still nothing. So you decide to visualize two sticks "///," then erase and visualize two more "///," and finally erase and visualize four more "///." But will this get through to Josef? He may think that you are trying to say "get some sticks for a big fire," or that you are sight-reading your national anthem, or that you are proposing some complicated sexual activity. Try to think that two plus two equals four without using any symbols at all and without using a picture (like the sticks) that requires a special interpretation which makes it something like a symbol. You can't do it.

Conclusions? (1) Most of our thinking goes on in language—usually in natural languages such as English, but also in ancillary "languages" such as binary arithmetic or propositional logic. What doesn't—images, imagined sounds, and so on—has to be given a symbolic, language-like interpretation. You have to learn the language—the vocabulary, the rules for putting together sentences, the relationships of meaning among the various sentences—before you can really begin to see how the sentences represent various situations in the language-user's world or serve to express desires, raise questions, and so on. (2) It does not help to be inside the alien or native mind.

(Hal Clement's *Needle* is very good on this point. His alien, a viral-organized creature that is living inside a human who is unknowingly replacing its normal host, gets its communication, after learning English by seeing it in practice over a few weeks, by projecting English sentences on his new host's retinas. It works the same way with computers. If you want to communicate with a computer or think on its wave length, you had better figure out the input-output language and ask the computer questions; it simply won't help to smash your way inside.)

So let's take a far—far look at case (1), in which you are trying to achieve translation between Josef of Borneo, who speaks XYZ, and you, who speak English. An obvious way to start is to

try to figure out the recurring (sound) alphabet of Josef's language (the "phonemes"). Then you might identify recurring series of sounds—words, recurring structures of words—phrases, clauses, sentences. In human languages we find that rules of construction break up into sound—or phonological—rules, which form words, and syntactical rules, which stitch together words into sentences. Once we get an idea of what the sentences of Josef's language are, we can begin to see what they mean. At least in the case of "observation sentences," such as "There's a Siamese cat in front of me," we can hope to correlate the sentence with a situation in the immediate environment; for other sentences, you figure out what they mean by relating them to other sentences (for example, you might find that people will affirm "There was a Siamese cat in front of me yesterday" just in the cases where they tended to say the observation sentence "There's a Siamese cat in front of me" yesterday, and so on).

To get back to Josef, suppose you find that whenever there is a rabbit in the local environment (or, strictly, when a local rabbit causes a sizable input to the retinas of local humans), Josef and the other speakers of XYZ say "ga va gai." You might suspect that "ga va gai" translates as "There's a rabbit." And you might hope to go on, hoping to find a regular way in which the structured sentences of the language represent situations in the local or not-so-local environments.

THIS PROCEDURE might just work. Indeed something very vaguely like this procedure is what human anthropologists have employed in trying to learn exotic languages. But it works as well as it does for two reasons: (A) Humans share a lot in how they sensed and conceptualize about the world. If a rabbit was slapping by Josef, you know that he will notice it and that he might talk about it because you know that you noticed it and might talk about it. But if we switch Josef for a sightless, squid-shaped Silicianian, as in case (3), who knows what such a thing might notice and how it might conceptualize about it? Chimpanzees conceptualize like us in that they can sort pictures into pictures of dogs, pictures of cats, pictures of birds, and so on. But the octopus doesn't sense or conceptualize at all like us. (B) But humans not only share (and

This procedure might just work, Indeed something very vaguely like this procedure is what human anthropologists have employed to learn exotic languages...

share to some degree with all mammals) much in the way they sense and conceptualize about the world in general, humans share (and not with mammals) a rich and complicated linguistic faculty, a very powerful and specialized way of hearing and sounding, of thinking. Modern linguists think that the human child has a complicated, innate program for filling in the details of the particular human language to which it is exposed.

Evidence for (B)? There is a lot of flashy recent data. There is some evidence that one- and two-day-old infants react in a patterned way to phonetic structure but not to jumbled speech sound (it doesn't matter what human language you use). There is some evidence that deaf children who are not exposed to sign language will develop sign language on their own, and the sign language seems to develop in much the same stages as does spoken language in more ordinary children. A large portion of one side of the human brain seems to serve as our language faculty; we are more like birds than mammals in possessing such lateralization. But there is much more obvious evidence. Namely, that the rules for putting together sentences in human languages are *structure dependent*. I'll explain what I mean by *structure dependent* through an example.

One obvious rule of English grammar shows you how to form an interrogative from a declarative (how to form "Is Jones sick?" from "Jones is sick?"). The actual rule tells you to put the main verb in the front of the sentence. Such a rule is *structure-dependent* because it depends on the abstract structural property of being a *main verb*, as opposed to the concrete property of being the second word in the sentence or the first verb or whatever. One way of explaining the structural dependence of linguistic rules is to assume that humans have wired-in notions like *sentence*, *noun*, *main verb*, *adjective*, *prepositional phrase*, and so on. If these notions are not innate, it is hard to see why they play such a huge role in

language learning.

ONE CAN give similar examples in phonology. If you ask a human to say the words "slit" and "split," the human will think that "split" will just amount to "slit" plus a "p" sound, and the humans who listen will "hear" a "p" in "split" and not in "slit." That's just the way the human linguistic faculty works. But the audio-graphic facts are these: There is no "p" sound, no objective vibration. If the length of time between the initial "s" sound and the "t" is shorter or longer than a certain amount, a human will hear "slit." If the time range is right, then a human will hear "split." The "p" in this case is the *sound of just the right amount of silence*.

Can you imagine the trouble an alien might have in case (2), trying to figure out a human language? The alien couldn't just go looking for recurring units of sound, physical vibrations, in our speech. There is no objective "p-vibration" in the "slit"-"split" case. The alien would have to figure out the abstract human system within which the abstract "p" is heard. Working up, the alien would also have to figure out the still more abstract structure-dependent rules of grammar and logic, and he would have to uncover the underlying features of our cognitive procedures. (Here I am again following the lead of Clement's work. He understood that the most revealing way of writing about human-alien translation is from the *alien* viewpoint. A really good human linguist tries to adopt the extraterrestrial viewpoint. Indeed much of the very real progress that linguistics and psychology have made recently has been through the availability of an alien viewpoint—namely, that of computers, whom we have to figure out how to teach how to understand us.)

So while the basic program—identify the vocabulary, the grammar for making sentences, the logical relationships between sentences, and the references to the world—remains the

same for cases (1)-(3), it looks to be difficult. The reason that inter-human translation works as well as it does is that we share much both in (A), the way we sense and conceptualize about the world, and in (B), the way in which we work up a structured understanding of how to hear, speak, and think with language. In case (2), we face the problem that the aliens share (A), but not (B), with us: the aliens sense and understand the world in general like us, but they do not work up language in the same way. Maybe they won't hear the *sound of silence* in "split."

In case (3), matters are still worse. We lack a similar linguistic faculty and our senses aren't at all the same. What do we have going for us when we try to communicate with a sightless, squid-shaped Siliconian? My beginning answer is that we share the notions *sentence*, *word*, *rule of grammar*, *truth*, *falsehood*; logical notions like *negation*, *conjunction*, *implication*, *proof*; basic scientific notions like *electron*, *atom*, *force*, *electromagnetism*, *star*, *planet*, *organism*. In the end, what we really need for translation is a shared scientific grasp of the basic character of the universe and of the logic and mathematics required in understanding it. That is why I must give up the idea of full communication, of translation, between myself and my cat, Mismo, though we share much emotionally, visually, and aurally. That is why I may hope—what an adventure that would be!—for a shared understanding and respect, and love, with the Siliconian, though it may wholly lack the rough mammalian range of immediate emotion and sensation. This applies as well to envisioned computers with self-teaching, multifaceted programs.

In thinking of such computers ("Hello, HAL"), we have to avoid the chauvinisms of parentalism and "hydrocarbonism." Just because we make (are parent to) something does not mean that it cannot think or be an independent person. (In any case, it has been shown that computers can reproduce themselves or still more complex



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G-1

Both Hal and I may think that $2 + 2 = 4$ or that humans are unreliable, but we will realize these thoughts in very different mental or machine languages.

computers.) Though, occasionally, a philosopher has proposed that only hydro-carbon structures can be conscious, or have "person-hood," it just seems plain and silly prejudice to think that Siliconians or "Metaloids" cannot be conscious, cannot be persons (and have rights, feelings, beliefs, knowledge, and so on).

It pays to have neighbors. From the chimpanzees we have learned that one may have similar sensory and conceptual categories, and yet not share a human style (or any style) of linguistic endowment. This separates case (1) from case (2). Some people, of course, have suggested that the gestural abilities of a trained chimpanzee like Washoe are just like human language displaced into signs. But this is to ignore the incalculable difference between Washoe and human children who develop signing because they are deaf. There is considerable evidence that deaf children who are not exposed to signing through fear that they will neglect lip reading *spontaneously invent sign language among themselves* in exactly the same stages in which normal children acquire spoken language, at least until age five or so. Washoe's signing, on the other hand, is the product of endless drill, with incessant use of reward and punishment. Washoe's general sensory and physical abilities are very like ours, but Washoe lacks a linguistic faculty.

From computers and computing theory we have begun to learn that very different physical structures (hydrocarbons, transistors) and programs (languages) may realize the same thoughts. Both Hal and I may think that $2 + 2 = 4$, or that humans are unreliable, but we will realize these thoughts in very different mental or machine languages. And computers may have very different sensory and physical abilities from ours. So, in our interaction with computers, we have something like case (3), truly radical translation. I say "something like case (3)," because we may know how the computer was built. To see that it really is like case (3) you have to think of how

difficult it would be to communicate with a computer that does not have an approximation of a human language like COBOL, etc., which it translates into its own machine language. You would get along much better with a chimp or a human baby or a human who spoke an unfamiliar language.

I am, by profession, a philosopher and I am going to conclude this piece by pointing out that the possibility of extraterrestrial translation suggests an answer to an age-old philosophical debate. Many philosophers—call them "anti-realists"—have wanted to say that what is real is what we humans can sense or experience "directly," things that we cannot sense—things like magnetism, electrons, abstractions, numbers, X-rays, and so on, call them "theoretical entities"—are not real but are just convenient "fictions" that allow us humans to summarize and predict our human sensory and cognitive experience. But why "we humans?"

Why not, for example, "me, Justin?" Historically, there have been philosophers who have gone that further step. That is, such a philosopher, for example David Hume, would claim that *only his* own sensory experience is real, while not only electrons, numbers, X-rays, etc., are unreal but so are other humans' experiences. But this seems too much to swallow, so most "anti-realists" have been content to say that what "we humans" experience is real—as opposed to electrons, numbers, X-rays, gravity, etc.

But if you drop the individual for humanity, why not move from "we humans" to "we thinkers?" It is their universe as much as it is ours, right? But then we cannot give special status to what we sense. Maybe the aliens sense X-rays and magnetism but not our visual spectrum. So "looking red" would be a "theoretical state" for the aliens.

What do "we thinkers," terrestrial or not, share? What is equally real for all of us? The answer, as I've suggested, is things like electrons, magnetism, energy, numbers, and so on, as abstract

notions like truth and falsity, word and sentence, logic, translation, etc. The peculiarities in sensory experience of particular species of thinkers, such as us humans, do not have a special status. The philosophical "realist" is one who maintains that the universe is what it is quite apart from such peculiarities. So the possibility of extraterrestrial translation suggests that philosophical realism is correct. It is in any case the view that we humans would do well to hope is accepted by any who might choose to visit us.

—G—

*Don't be contemptuous about "just thinking about it" as a research strategy. Both Galileo and Newton achieved their most important discoveries by "thought experiments" that they didn't, or couldn't, try out in actual physical experiments. And Newton fudged observational results because they didn't fit what he thought had to happen (and he was right). The normal mode of real science is to make the facts fit the theory that intuition tells us is right and excitingly deep, not the other way around.

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- ☐ Woman
☐ Man

2. What is your age?

- ☐ Under 18
☐ 18-21
☐ 22-25
☐ 26-30
☐ 30-39
☐ 40-50
☐ Over 50

3. Are you

- ☐ Single
☐ Married

4. What level of education have you completed?

- ☐ High School
☐ Some College
☐ College or University
☐ Graduate or Professional School

5. In which of these categories does your occupation fall?

- ☐ Homemaking
☐ Student
☐ Professional (Doctor, Lawyer, etc.)
☐ Technology or Science (Engineer, Programmer, etc.)
☐ Education (Teacher or Administrator)
☐ Trade (Carpenter, Printer, etc.)
☐ Other (Please specify.)

6. What was your total personal income before taxes for 1977?

- ☐ Under \$5,000
☐ \$5,000—\$10,000
☐ \$10,000—\$12,500
☐ \$12,500—\$15,000
☐ \$15,000—\$20,000
☐ \$20,000—\$25,000
☐ Over \$25,000

7. Please mark any of the following that you own.

- ☐ House
☐ Car, American-made
☐ Car, Foreign-made
☐ Color Television Set
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☐ Stereo Record Player (Complete Unit)
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- ☐ Purchase books from a book club
- ☐ Rent or lease a car
- ☐ Travel more than 200 miles by car
- ☐ Travel more than 200 miles by airplane
- ☐ Attend a Science Fiction Convention

9. How many books do you buy in an average month?

- ☐ 0-2
- ☐ 3-5
- ☐ 5 or more

10. How many records do you buy in an average month?

- ☐ 0-2
- ☐ 3-5
- ☐ 5 or more

11. How many movies do you see in an average month?

- ☐ 0-2
- ☐ 3-5
- ☐ 5 or more

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- ☐ Beer
- ☐ Wine
- ☐ Spirits

13. How many people besides you read your copy of GALILEO?

- ☐ None
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14. What other Science Fiction publications do you subscribe to?

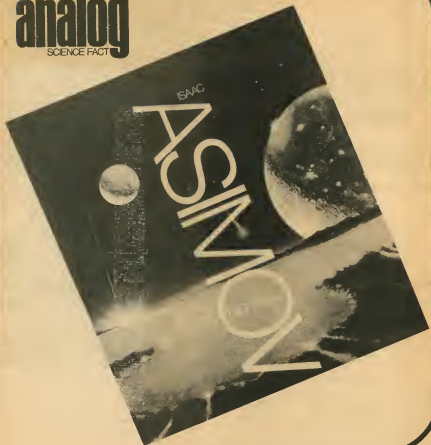
- ☐ Analog
- ☐ Fantasy and Science Fiction
- ☐ Isaac Asimov's
- ☐ Heavy Metal
- ☐ Galaxy
- ☐ Starlog
- ☐ Fanzone (Which one?).....

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Exp. Date _____

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A Look At John Schoenherr

Sandra Miesel



JOHN SCHOENHERR was born in New York City in 1935, studied at the Art Students' League, and was graduated from Pratt Institute in 1956. He and his family now live on a New Jersey farm which has reverted to wilderness. He has been a regular contributor to *Analog* for nearly twenty years and received the Hugo award as best professional artist in 1965.

The most striking characteristics of Schoenherr's covers are simplicity and objectivity. These well-composed paintings avoid unnecessary detail and depict fictional scenes in a totally straightforward manner. His realism is a matter of content rather than style. Surfaces are formalized, rendered in small patches of flat impasto without much modeling or differentiation of

textures. His visible brush strokes define form by volume rather than by line. Human faces are never shown in closeup, figures are simplified, details of costume and equipment are minimized. A restricted palette for each painting concentrates impact. Schoenherr's color schemes may be either muted or rich, but never flashy. He confines himself to actual incidents in the story without overt use of design or symbolism, beyond a certain fondness for rounded shells and carapace-like forms. His magnificent *Dune* calendar with its somber color schemes, robed or helmeted figures, gape-mouthed sandworms, caverns, desert, and eroded mountains is a visual catalog of all these traits.

Schoenherr's stated objective as an illustrator is to make images that will

involve the casual viewer and motivate him to read the story. Yet, on the whole, his science fiction color work is emotionally detached. These are pictures of events happening to other beings.

But the black and white interior illustrations that are his forte do successfully convey emotion. Far more abstract than the covers, they are also more expressive and romantic. On rare occasions, even a touch of humor peeps through. However, these differences may simply reflect the practical necessity of painting a magazine cover first, before the artist has become completely saturated with story images.

Whether rigorously precise scratchboard or casual drybrush, the common denominator of Schoenherr's variegated drawing techniques is superb drafts-

manship. This has been true throughout his career since he first established himself in *Astounding* editor John Campbell's favor in the late 1950's with meticulously detailed pen and ink drawing. His work was the chief ornament of the large size *Analog* of the early 1960's. For instance, he produced stunning scratchboards as finely delineated as wood engravings for "Dune World," and vigorous acrylic drybrush drawings on illustration board for "Prophet of Dune," winning himself a Hugo in the process.

When *Analog* shrank to its present format and his favorite type of scratchboard base ceased to be available, Schoenherr experimented with other media. Acrylic over gesso, with or without halftones, as in "Weyr Search" and "Dragonrider," was one alternative. Of late, he usually works in drybrush ink on heavily textured watercolor paper as for "Children of Dune." This changeover has been accompanied by an expansion in the size of the work—his original drawings are now at least four times the size of

the magazine reproductions. There has also been a gradual shift in his interiors over the years from tightness to relaxation, from predominance of black to predominance of white space.

Acrylics or other aqueous media are the usual choices for Schoenherr's color work. Oils dry too slowly and invite fussiness. The first cover for "Prophet of Dune" (reprinted on the hardcover edition of *Dune*) was a mixed-media effort, Acrylic over gesso was supplemented with gouache, ink, and casein to achieve a truly ominous landscape.





Schoenherr seldom has occasion to do research for his assignments beyond photographs to check anatomy for special poses. For example, the hands clutching the globe on the opening page of "Dune World" are the artist's own. "Everything happens inside my head," he explains. One exception was "The Tuveia." He had the opportunity to observe and handle otters in the care of a naturalist friend before painting the delightful giant otters for that cover. But authenticity was compromised slightly when Campbell compelled him to give the heroine standing beside the otters a bra although the story's text clearly indicated that she was wearing none.

Schoenherr's spacecraft or other mechanical devices make no pretense to reality. They might as well be trans-

mogrified wine bottles or washing machine agitators. He admits, "I'm very unsophisticated technologically." He concentrates on creating aesthetically pleasing forms appropriate to a given story. Yet it is interesting to note that the paintings he has kept in his personal collection often feature technical subjects.

Unless specific costumes are unavoidably required, as in "Too Many Magicians" or the *Dune* series, Schoenherr's figures tend to wear flowing robes or nondescript jumpsuits. "Clothes need to be worn and disregarded," he remarks. Simple garb directs attention to the figure itself. It is also a deliberate protest against the now badly outdated "futuristic" modes of early sf.

Schoenherr's achievements repre-

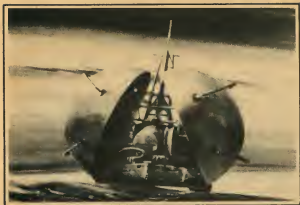
senting alien beings reflect his superlative gift for painting real animals. To cite but one example: the creature in "And Seven Times Never Kill a Man" was actually modeled on his Airedale dog. As he explains, quoting one of the Old Masters, "Facility to draw what you see improves your skill at drawing what you can imagine." The challenge of designing a convincing alien stimulates his creativity. He especially enjoyed doing Anne McCaffrey's dragons because they resemble flying dinosaurs. The artist admits to being "very dinosaur-oriented" and once cherished the ambition of becoming a paleontologist. In general, he is partial to large, slow, lumbering beasts like moose, bears, and bison—all congenial subjects for this stocky, furry man.

Outside the science fiction field, Schoenherr is known as one of the finest animal artists working today. He has illustrated many children's books (most notably, the 1973 Newberry Medal winner, *Julie of the Wolves* by Jean Craighead George) and has even written one himself (*The Barn*). His original paintings have appeared in gallery, museum, and university shows and are regularly displayed in a New York art gallery. Two works are now available as limited edition lithographic prints. He has completed assignments for the National Park Service, the National Speleological Society, the U.S. Air Force, and NASA.

The artist exercises his extensive knowledge of zoology and natural history in field observations of wild animals. Chasing mountain goats up and down the Rockies is an appealing occupation since mountain climbing is one of his hobbies. Another is cave exploration: "I like the feeling of climbing through three dimensions." The caverns and rugged scenery in the *Dune* series reflect personal experience and the building-scaling hero of "Doorways in the Sand" projects his own fantasies about challenging structures in Manhattan. (However, he has yet to find a professional application for his latest enthusiasm—knapping flints.)

Schoenherr's indoor interests include the appreciation of Oriental art, especially Chinese landscapes and Japanese prints, as well as primitive artifacts, although he discounts his expertise as "superficial and disorganized." Vermeer and Rembrandt are among his favorite Western artists but Dürer and Degas are his "particular heroes." Among sf artists, he most admires

A Look at John Schoenherr



tions which at their best—the Dune and Dragonrider series—establish normative images by which all future renditions of these stories will be judged.

—G—

Pictures courtesy of John Schoenherr and Sandra Miesel

Cartier because "I found myself enjoying stories he'd illustrated more than those others had done. He was perhaps the only man who could give a strange personality to a boiled egg."

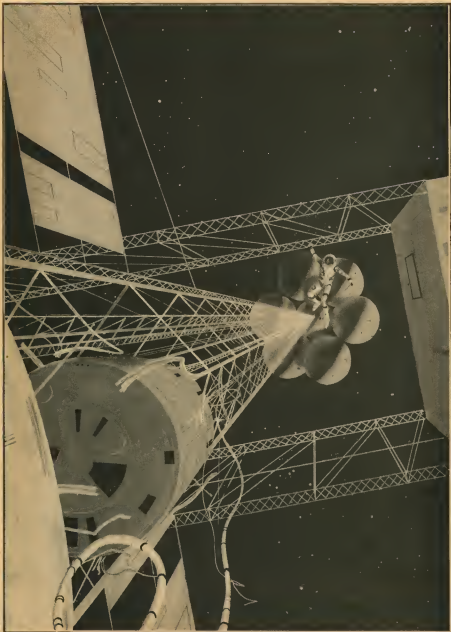
It was a youthful attraction toward science fiction that led the artist to make a career illustrating it. Moreover, it was the only work he could find after graduating from art school. As a reader he had found the Campbell brand of sf most congenial. Thus it was fitting that after initial sales to *Amazing* and *Fantastic* in 1956 and hundreds of paperback covers most mercifully forgotten, Schoenherr established himself in *Astounding/Analog*. Looking back, he is glad to have had the opportunity of working with Campbell and despite occasional differences, recalls it as "the most tranquil period of my life."

Although Schoenherr's career is now principally centered in animal illustration and he is too busy to read any sf except assigned manuscripts, he continues with sf art because "I do enjoy it. I spent three years without doing any science fiction and discovered that I missed it. It's relaxing and stimulating. It's the same discipline of painting and drawing but the thought processes are a little more creative."

He has a certain reticence about discussing his work since he feels that "when a good artist tries to write about his art, he usually sounds like an idiot. When a bad artist tries, he sounds like a pompous idiot. But the air of pomposity lends some authority."

But whatever the artist's personal attitudes, to the viewer, he is a creator of wonderfully sophisticated illustra-





Loss Of Signal

Mark J. McGarry

NICKEL AND IRON IT WAS, and it had been tumbling end over end in this selfsame path around this dull red star for a time longer than Mankind had been in existence. It was neither large nor small, in comparison to its fellows, but of a moderate size. It was only one of millions of similar peices of debris in this neighborhood, and by itself it was of no significance.

The proximity alarm sounded. Jorge Lasser reached out lazily and flicked a switch. The read-out formed in the pale blue screen on the arm of his couch. His eyes wandered over the glowing letters, then he blanked them and tapped the call button of his commlink. "Masterson?"

"Masterson here. Another rock, Jorge?" asked the voice from the control blister.

"Not this time. It's nearly two meters through its greatest cross-section, several hundred kilos in mass. A boulder. And it was deflected by the electromagnetic shield at one and a half kilometers."

"Pretty damned close. Oh... Bleecker will be relieving me in about ten minutes."

"Right." There was a faint click, as Masterson's commlink was deactivated. Lasser switched his own off, stretched his arms, then attacked the entry-board, coding several hundred bits of data on the characteristics and trajectory of the meteoroid. Though watching for enemy craft was his primary duty, logging the meteoroids that came within sensor range of the Trumviratne scout *Son Francisco* seemed to take up all his time. He did not know why it was necessary, but he had not questioned his orders—if only because he knew the effort would have been in vain.

When he had finished logging in the data, he checked his figures, and swore. He had mis-entered a single digit in one of the equations that expressed an aspect of the object's orbit. In order to correct it, he must wipe the entire entry and begin again. He shrugged, left the entry as it was, and smiled to himself at having solved the difficulty.

A year ago, when he had been moved to active duty, he would not have considered doing such a thing. Lasser was thirty-five, old for StarForce duty. He had been a pilot for a sub-orbital transport company back on the homeworld, a job he had held and hated for eight years. As the strato-pilots had

replaced air-pilots as figures of romance, so had the Forcers replaced the strato-pilots. Lasser had found his job as tedious and boring as any his old friends held, and as lacking in reward. After his divorce, he had quit the job, and all his benefits, and become a Forcer cadet. The oldest man in his classes, he had nevertheless finished in the top ten percent. When he had drawn duty on one of the scouts, he had been filled with excitement and elation. Nearly a year later, he had come to the realization that any romance associated with the Force was a product of the service's public relations departments. His duties on board the *Son Francisco* were even more tedious than his old job, and the pay was worse.

Lasser blackened his entire monitoring board, except for the proximity warning device, and glanced around the ten-meter watchsphere, of which he was the core. All about him were the magnification screens which brought the entire volume of space around Barnard's Star closer to him by a factor of from one to ten thousand. Smaller screens mounted on the arms and swing-away desk of his maneuverable couch relayed information to him from the *Son Francisco*'s computers. These were housed in the main hull, separated from Lasser by a kilometer-long boom. The sensory nacelles mounted outside the watchsphere could not have functioned had they been nearer the ship's fusion pile, and the Robinson Impeller, with their interfering radiations. Also with the main hull were the ship's five reaction-mass tanks, each holding several hundred liters of hydrogen slush; within it were the control and engineering sections, and living quarters and supplies for the nine-man crew.

Lasser looked again at Barnard's Star's only planet. The bloated sub-Jovian nestled in space nearly a million kilometers distant. The hydrogen of its atmosphere served as fuel for the ships of the StarForce; yet those ships were few, and Jupiter was as suitable for the purpose, and far closer to the homeworld. This duty seemed a waste of time—both of Lasser's and the ship's—especially in light of the fact that this small vessel was no match in combat for any ship of the enemy's. A scout, he mused, should be scouting, not drifting an ungodly distance from some equally ungodly planet. He cursed, a sound followed by the walls of the sphere, and glared sullenly at the planet.

Four hours later, Lasser heard the hum of the elevator as it

raced along its tracks within the boom. He checked his sensors for a final time, made the appropriate entry in the log, and swung the couch around as a white-enamelled hatch—the only break in the monotony of the star-sprinkled screens—slid open. Per Liljedahl, his boyish face pulled into its customary scowl, his fine, blond hair in more than the usual disarray, maneuvered his body through the hatch and took Lasser's position, almost before he had vacated it. "Any entries?" asked the Swede snappishly.

"One. It's on the log," replied Lasser in the same tone. "And you're supposed to make an inspection of the boom interior. It was supposed to have been done a month ago."

"So why didn't you do it?"

"Because it's not my damned trick, that's why. Vecellio did it last time, and I did it the time before." Lasser had left the watchsphere and closed the hatch before Liljedahl could reply.

Lasser pushed himself into the waiting elevator, and slid the grate shut over his head. Gripping the handholds inside the cramped cage, Lasser thumbed a switch set in one of the tubular steel bars. He felt a savage push as the car accelerated; his weight increased from nothing to a third of his eighty kilograms. In the light of the illuminators, he could see the cables and conduits that ran inside the boom. Looking between his feet, he could see a rapidly approaching twin of the hatch he had just left. Lasser was tugged in the opposite direction as the electromagnets that propelled the elevator reversed themselves, and slowed him. There was a feathery jar as the car berthed. He kicked open the grate underfoot and pushed himself out of the cage, through the hatch, and into the main hall.

He went to the *San Francisco's* combined mess and recreation halls. There were five others there, all the off-duty personnel. It was "Tuesday," the day of the weekly meeting of what Masterson had termed, in a moment of rare humor and customary sarcasm, the sewing circle.

"Have a seat, Jorge. We thought for a while you would not come," said Kumachinko.

"One minute." Lasser drifted over to the food dispenser, took a bottle of coffee, and started back. He waved to L'Heureaux and to Captain Bleecker, who sat together at a table away from the rest of the men.

"Good morning," said L'Heureaux, a little too loudly. He gave Lasser his usual lopsided smile when Lasser said (as he always did), "Not established!" Bleecker did not acknowledge him.

"And I tell you it won't, damn it!" Lasser turned his head sharply in the direction of the voice. Randolph, the tall and muscular engineer, had jumped from his seat—nearly forgetting to hold onto the edge of the table as he did so—and was glaring at Monroe, another engineer.

"Hold it," said Lasser, taking a chair adjacent to Monroe. "This sewing circle is supposed to promote *peaceful* discussion."

Monroe looked disgusted. "This idiot says the war will go on until Earth and the colonies run out of resources."

"Which will never happen," said Lasser, "considering the small amount of resources the Force uses."

"There!" said Randolph triumphantly. He sat down. "That's what I was telling this damned albino—"

"Let's not let religions enter into this," offered Kumachinko hastily, seeing the look on Monroe's face. "Just be calm, both of you." It was an order, though diplomatically phrased.

When the two men had sat back and looked a little more restrained, Lasser continued, "I only said our resources will never run out. I didn't say the war would never end."

"Humanity, and the Harbingers by inference, are variable," interjected Monroe in precise tones. "A movement, a faction, something, may cause one side or the other to re-examine its motives for war and—"

"We don't have to examine our motives," said Randolph. "They started it. Any idiot knows that."

Tension built again, momentarily, until Kumachinko broke the silence by saying, "Have any of you heard about the *Warsaw*?"

"What happened to the *Warsaw*?" asked Lasser absently.

"Slagged," Kumachinko said. "Harbinger battle-cruiser lined her up, and shot—"

"—Shot a slug right up her exhaust bell." Monroe blew air in a disgusted manner. "That's the third time this year. Lasser, why can't you guys see them coming?"

"Because your fucking engine is in the way." Even Lasser was irritable now.

"Well, without the engines we wouldn't move too fast, now, would we?" asked Monroe sweetly.

"And we wouldn't be blown to—"

Bleecker called Lasser's name then, a sound that, blade-like, cut through the lines of argument.

"Yessir?" Bleecker beckoned for him to come over to his table. Lasser shrugged, and went. "Sir?"

"That meteoroid last shift, you're sure you logged it correctly?"

Lasser braced himself. Bleecker was a formidable man: one hundred-ten kilograms, packed into one hundred sixty-five centimeters, and no fat on him. His gray eyes, burning from his chocolate face, were hard as he looked at Lasser.

"I'd think so," he lied. "Is something wrong?"

Bleecker hesitated a moment before replying. "No, just unusual. L'Heureaux was interested in that rock. He thinks we're in a heavy debris zone. . . You tell it."

"I think Barnard's Star may have an asteroid belt," said L'Heureaux, "and we're in it. That in itself is interesting. Then there's the point that, since that rock hit our electromagnetic shields dead on, if it had had any more velocity than it did, it could have pierced the shields and totaled us. So I pulled the log entry, out of morbid curiosity. The way our shields work—and according to my own calculation—the meteoroid should have been put into our own orbital track, though behind us, and travelling the opposite direction from the ship, of course. According to your entry, it didn't: it skipped off the shields, and into the sun."

"Liljedahl checked?" asked Lasser.

"The entry, yes," said L'Heureaux. "We can't see the rock now, if I'm right, because it would be directly behind the ship, where your sensors can't pick it up. Liljedahl checked the area where you said it would be, at high magnification; he found a lot of debris, but nothing that could be positively identified as the object that struck us. But that proves nothing."

"I'll check when I go on shift," offered Lasser. "And I'll re-work those trajectories."

L'Heureaux shrugged. "Don't bother," said Bleecker. "It's not that important."

Lasser nodded, and left them. He was sure one, or both, knew he had made a mistake. It had been an incredibly small chance that they'd encountered the bit of debris in the first place. The shields tended to bend particles in paths around

He was sure one, or both, knew he had made a mistake...What were the odds, ten billion to one? Too small to be calculated, and thus small enough to have attracted L'Heureaux's attention.

the ship, like water in a boat's wake, but it was also a microscopic chance that the rock had been sent into a path corresponding to the *San Francisco's* own. What were the odds, ten billion to one? Too small to be calculated, and thus small enough to have attracted L'Heureaux's attention. Lasser was disgusted. It would probably go into Bleeker's mission report.

FOR A THOUSAND MILLION YEARS, nothing had disturbed the path of the metallic rock. It had traced the selfsame orbit around the bloated red sun countless times—until now. It had approached the human ship, and the impact would have vaporized both. But forces—similar to the electromagnetic field that surrounded the sub-Jovian world, but much stranger, much more concentrated—gripped the rock and flung it out of its orbit. The human ship passed on, but the tapering end of its magnetic shield lingered, dragged at the ores in the boulder, and drew it into line behind the receding starship. It had been returned very nearly to its previous orbit.

Liljedahl's mind was roiling, seething, as he stared blindly at the stars that were reproduced in the screens of the watchsphere. He fumbled for the small leather case he had tucked into the top of his boot. He must hurry; the fat Russian was always late, was probably in the mess as usual, but Liljedahl still would not have much time. It did not matter, though; he had a need. He unzipped the case, which was cracked and lusterless with age. Within lay a small vial half-filled with white powder, a second filled with distilled water, and a small, needle-nosed hypo-gun not much larger than his index finger. When Liljedahl had finished with these things, he replaced them all in the case, and unsteadily put the case back in his boot, where it could not be seen.

Kumachinko felt only slightly guilty. He was a little late—twenty minutes, he grudgingly admitted to himself—but so what? Nobody liked the pushy Swede anyway. Almost gracefully, Kumachinko maneuvered his bulk into the cramped elevator cage. He activated it. The electromagnets hurred the car forward with an acceleration of several meters per second per second. When the car passed mid-point, an electrical impulse was sent along kilometers of wire, ordering the electromagnets to cease their plunge and bring the cage to a gentle stop. The current passed along the wire until it reached a point where insulation had worn thin. Electricity sparked across the gap to the metal walls of the boom: short.

Kumachinko gazed with speechless horror as the hatch to the watchsphere approached him at approximately sixty meters per second. The car struck the bulkhead, denting it, rebounded, tore free from its guide-rails and slewed around inside the boom, peeling cables, conduits, and lighting fixtures from the walls. The car eventually stopped, in the dim illumination of the emergency lights, ten meters from the watchsphere.

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Liljedahl did not notice the impact of car and occupant, nor did he notice the cessation of the gentle breeze from the watchsphere's ventilators. He had passed out.

Minutes later, he did not hear the proximity alarm begin to ring.

BLEEKER LOOKED DOWN at the ship's Master Situation Board and stifled a surprised sound. He activated his commlink. "Sanchez? I've got a loss of signal from the boom and the watchsphere. The emergency circuits haven't cut in. Try to restore communications manually."

In the engineering section, Sanchez nodded into his commlink's small screen, then busied himself with an array of controls and monitors. After several frustrating moments, he activated a remotely-controlled camera in the boom. It began to move along its narrow track when he twisted a dial. The camera tracked away from the main hull, slowed, and stopped. He saw some kind of foreign object in front of the camera lens, but he could not make out what it was. Sanchez grumbled and brought the camera back a few meters. "Something's blocking the camera..." he narrated for the commlink. He frowned, concentrating, as he focussed the camera and peered into the dim screen.

"*Madre de Dios!* Captain, who was in the elevator?"

"Kumachinko, I think..." Bleeker turned from the screen in revulsion as Sanchez cut him in on the camera-circuit.

They had assembled in the mess. Masterson was up in control, monitoring the ship through the Situation Board.

"EVA is the only way," said Randolph. "I went into the boom—it's hopeless; the cage is wedged solid in there. It'd take hours to clear it, unless you want to rip it out, and chance damaging the interior of the boom even more."

"It's about eleven hundred meters from our airlock to the small emergency lock alongside the watchsphere. That would take..." Captain Bleeker paused. "Say an hour. Does Liljedahl have that long?"

Randolph nodded. "I'd say his oxygen would last maybe forty minutes beyond that. The cold will hurt, but there wouldn't be any permanent damage. The hull doesn't leak heat that quickly."

"There's risk for the man going out," said Sanchez, "for the sake of a man we're not even sure is alive. Cutting the cage apart, piecemeal, is safer."

"Would it be?" asked Lasser. "We don't know how much damage the boom has sustained. If it's in a worse shape than we think, and someone starts working with a torch in there, we could be holed, or the boom might be severed entirely. You know it's made of paper."

"That's very unlikely," L'Heureaux said.

"But still a possibility! Also, we can all agree that the damage to the wiring and conduits in the boom is extensive.

We may have to bypass the damage completely, and that means running a cable from the shuttle soft-dock outlet into the sphere directly, which is EVA anyway. Lastly, I can make that walk in forty-five minutes."

"You? How did you get elected?" asked Sanchez. "I've had more time outside than you."

"But you don't know the watchsphere or the sensors' circuits like I do," said Lasser.

Masterson's voice from the commlink said, "If you bring your cable through the emergency airlock, you still couldn't help Liljedahl. You couldn't close the doors to the lock."

"I'm thinking about the sensors," Lasser said. "We're blind without them."

"Blind to what?" asked Randolph.

"This is war, remember," said Lasser, exasperated. "We can't see them coming."

"Shit," said Randolph. "I've been in the Force for four years and I've never seen any of them, coming or going, once."

"Then I can get a suit to Liljedahl before I bring the cable into the watchsphere," said Lasser. "Come on, is it yes or no? We're wasting time!"

"He just wants to be a hero," said Monroe slowly. "We don't need an EVA, but Lasser does."

Lasser looked at the albino for moments, an unreadable expression on his face. Then he looked to Blecker. "Sir?"

The officer stirred, hesitated. "Go on, Lasser."

Monroe made a sound of disgust.

THE CABLE, a full twelve centimeters in diameter, was mated with the female receptacle on the hull next to the *San Francisco's* main airlock. The lock was about three meters wide, two high, and four deep. Lasser felt dwarfed by it. Walking stiffly in his pressurized armor, he jerked to the edge of the airlock and stopped, one gloved hand clutching the edge of the partly retracted door. All his courage, his confidence, and his bravado drained from him as he stood in the void with nothing but a few kilograms of mylar between him and the specter of death.

He released his choke-hold on the door and reached out for the cable, stuck to the hull next to the airlock with a magnetized collar. Lasser braced himself, then carefully placed first one boot, then the other, on the hull. He suppressed the urge to reach for support as he stood erect. After a moment his trembling had stopped enough for him to clip the snaking monster to his belt. Fifteen hundred meters of cable coiled and snaked behind him as it unreeled from the hold under the lock. He breathed deeply from the re-cycled air, and his self-assuredness mysteriously returned, and he felt charged with an intoxicating feeling of power. He laughed.

"Lasser, are you all right?" Blecker's voice was weak and distant-sounding. The suit radios were weak to begin with. The *San Francisco's* fusion-pile provided enough interference to make the signal even worse.

"I'm fine."

"You had better start, then. Someone here will contact you every five minutes." Transmission would improve as Lasser left the vicinity of the power pile. Keeping his eyes on the riveted plating, Lasser reached between his feet and grabbed a rung welded to the hull. He pulled the magnetic sole of his boots stickily from the hull. He began to pull himself hand over hand. His gloves automatically gripped, then released, the hand-holds. The rungs gave the bright white hull of the

ship a pebbled look from a distance; they covered almost the entire ship. Lasser looked over his shoulder to make sure the cable was free of loops and tangles, then cautiously reached over his shoulder. He nudged the large pack containing an extra suit and helmet. It was secure.

Blecker came on for the five-minute check; it seemed to have been longer. Lasser had covered thirty meters, about what he had expected. His speed would pick up as he became more sure of himself.

Lasser reached the point where the main hull melded to the boom. He looked along the shaft to the tiny globe, shining brightly—*too* brightly—across the distance. He squinted. "Captain?"

"This is Masterson, Jorge," said a voice in his earphones.

"I think I'm going to have a little problem. The sensors on the watchsphere are still under power. It must be only our control and monitoring lines that are out." Which was logical: there were three electrical lines to the watchsphere, each with a back-up. The sensors would still function, even if only one line was intact.

There was a lengthy pause on the other end. "The Captain wants to know if you think it'd be better if you came back."

"I'm halfway there now," said Lasser. He began to pull himself along the rungs welded to the boom. "There's no point turning back now."

"You'll be out of radio-contact most of the time, with the interference from the sensors," Masterson pointed out.

"I'll be there in twenty minutes," said Lasser. "I'm making good time."

Thirty minutes later he had just over a hundred meters remaining between himself and the watchsphere. He didn't have to make any explanations to Blecker or Masterson: the interference from the sensor nacelles had long since muddled transmissions hopelessly. Lasser's breathing was heavy; it caught on the razored edges of his throat and made him dizzy with pain. The static charges given off by the sensor nacelles blinded and confused him. More by intuition than sight, he covered the final distance. After a few minutes, he struck the hull of the watchsphere head on. His helmet rang like a gong. One hand groped for the lever that would open the emergency hatch. It took him long seconds before he found it, and when he pulled on it, the frozen alloy resisted him—then yielded. He could see, dimly, that the hatch had not slid aside. He cursed weakly, but with conviction, then brought his fist back and struck the reluctant portal in its center. Slowly it withdrew into the hull. He affixed the cable to the outside of the airlock and entered. He closed the hatch behind him.

The lock was tiny, not more than one hundred-fifty centimeters in any dimension. Lasser had to execute an awkward deep knee bend to reach the inner hatch, which was beneath his feet. He had never expected to use the emergency airlock. Grunting and sweating, he thought it obvious the starship's designers had never admitted the possibility, either. He flipped a bright green toggle next to the inner airlock door. He was buffeted by a blast of oxygen-nitrogen mix jetting into the lock, bringing the pressure up to five hundred torr. He pulled a lever, and the door slid open for him.

He encountered wreckage on the other side. The bumper that killed the last of the elevator's momentum was smashed, partly blocking the entrance to the watchsphere. The metal was not strong, and he bent it away from the hatch. Lasser looked down the boom, and was surprised at the density of the red haze clouding it. There was a fantastic amount of

All his courage, his confidence, and his bravado drained from him as he stood in the void with nothing but a few kilograms of mylar between him and the specter of death.

blood. If the air currents brought it up here, it could make his work difficult. He spotted a movement down there; Sanchez was trying to bring the camera past the elevator cage. It stopped as it encountered a length of steel that lay across its rail. They were probably trying to find out if he had made it. He told himself he didn't have the time to reassure them. Lasser passed into the watchsphere.

Liljedahl was suspended limply from his couch, though Lasser could find nothing wrong with him. The straps binding the Swede released easily. He let Liljedahl float free while he took the extra suit from his back.

Suddenly, Lasser was spinning into the star-strewn wall. It took him a moment to realize that Liljedahl was on his back. He was trying to choke Lasser.

Liljedahl hit the wall first, Lasser on top of him. Liljedahl let go.

Lasser maintained contact by grabbing Liljedahl's shirt. Face contorted with horror or anger, the man reached for Lasser's throat again. That his hands encountered only a rigid seal did not deter him. Lasser did not know what was wrong with him. He hit him twice in the head with his heavy, gloved fist.

It took fifteen minutes for Lasser to get Liljedahl into the suit, seal it, and power it. The life-monitors on Liljedahl's chest showed his condition as stable, though Lasser thought he would be out for a while and that he would need some sort of cosmetic medical attention. Lasser tied him to the pedestal connecting the couch to the floor, using the straps from his pack.

Lasser slid into the couch and activated the situation board and monitors. All the communications systems were out, as was the air supply. Data was still coming into the watchsphere from the sensors, but that information could not be conveyed to the main hull. Replies would be easier than he had expected. Then, looking over the board, he saw an amber light he could not immediately account for. The proximity alarm was on. His helmet had insulated him from the sound. He pressed a button next to the alarm and part of the electronic sky was outlined in glowing red. He swung the couch around: the object was coming from behind the *San Francisco*. He tapped the magnification up, and the object was transformed from an ambiguous point of light to another ship. As Lasser watched in gruesome fascination—as one might watch a great white shark on its final run—the Harbinger battle-cruiser disappeared, as it entered the blind-spot created by the *San Francisco*'s engine. A flashing after-image marked the cruiser's last position. Lasser extrapolated her path himself: she was climbing up into the human ship's orbit. The enemy had almost been inside firing range when he had lost track of it, and it had been accelerating. His figures told Lasser they had about thirty minutes, possibly less, until the Harbinger would funnel her own electromagnetic shields, and use them to propel a half-ton slug of iron at, and into, the *San Francisco*.

Mark J. McGarry

The ship would be torn to pieces by the projectile. He almost retched in his suit, weak and sick with fear. There was no time to get back to the main hull.

Lasser struck his open palm with his fist. There was still some time left. Here was his chance to save not only Liljedahl, but the entire ship. The prospect thrilled him, and fired him with new excitement. A strange clarity filled his mind. He now saw a course of action, and he began to follow it.

Lasser hit the *AIR EVAC* toggle on his board, then left the watchsphere, securing the hatch behind him. It would take about fifteen minutes for the sphere to empty itself; decompression would be gradual, and would not damage his instruments. When he passed through the emergency lock, he tied a nylon line from his belt to the lever inside, and left the outer hatch open. Lasser moved as far down the boom as the cord would allow, then he tugged on it, pulling the lever.

The inner hatch opened, evacuating the boom interior. One hundred-fifty thousand cubic meters of air under two-thirds of an atmosphere of pressure slammed into space, leaving a patina of frost around the airlock, and glittering galaxies of flash-frozen water and blood crystals in the space around the watchsphere. The force of outrushing air had largely been spent by the time it reached Lasser. Had he done otherwise, had he opened the airlock doors in the proper succession, he would first have been crushed against the outer door, then flung into space.

He glanced at his chronometer: the watchsphere would not be completely empty, but he could not wait. He went to the cable he had brought from the main hull. He tore the magnetic collar from it and sent that tumbling into the void, then dragged the cable in after him through the airlock. Air puffed gently at him when he opened the hatch to the watchsphere and went inside.

After only a few minutes of examination, Lasser knew the modifications he would have to make in the instrumentation in order for it to accept the cable would take at least twenty minutes longer than he had.

He went back into the boom: Through the wreckage of the elevator—and of Kumachiako—he saw a rectangular object: Sanchez's camera. He covered the forty meters to the elevator cage in half as many seconds, and reached through the jagged web of metal. His hand barely touched the camera's blood-encrusted housing. Lasser fumbled at his belt, and found a wicked-clawed prying tool. When he pushed his body up against the cage, he could reach the camera with the tool. He attacked the bracket that held the camera to its rail. The job took only seconds. He almost lost the camera then, but managed to coax it closer to him with the tool until he could grab it. Lasser studied the wiring set-up. Five simple leads had led from the bracket to constant contacts that ran the length of the rail. These wires now dangled free. Lasser checked the rail. Though it was bent, it was unbroken. He turned to the cable he had brought. It had originally been

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Do Not Go Gentle

Kevin O'Donnell, Jr.

CLUMSILY—BECAUSE EVEN after months of adjustment she still couldn't prevent the anger-flare (all that time I spent with him wasted) when she saw the soul surrender its hold, and begin to diffuse into the environment—she straightened the old man's sheets, and picked up the clipboard. "I have to go now, Mr. Tomiglio." The words stumbled off her tongue, unbalanced by her close attention. If she didn't scrutinize them, a clue would slip into their midst. "If you need anything—" she nodded to the plastic box with its plastic button and its plastic-coated wires plunging into the very veins of the hospital "—just ring, and somebody will come."

I won't, she thought as she backed away, somebody else will, but I won't.

The withered face on the white pillow turned to follow her progress; its jutting nose, misleadingly defiant, seemed to take aim at her heart. The bloodshot eyes blinked once, blinked twice. Stepping through the greenish fringes of his spreading aura, she swung the door shut behind her.

"Giving up on old Tomiglio?" rasped a familiar voice.

"Good morning, Doctor." She half-nodded, a token bow to his token authority. Short and pudgy, he was married to a woman who'd once thought merely landing an MD guaranteed happiness. In consequence, he was addicted to golf and poker and anything else that got him out of the house. It was rumored that his numerous papers were less the result of a driving ambition than they were a means of soliciting invitations to far-away conventions. For all that, though, he'd never made a pass at her, or at any of the floor nurses. He should have been a monk.

He wasn't about to let her off easily. "You just gave up on Tomiglio, didn't you? I saw it in your eyes."

"Doctor, I... I don't know what you're talking about."

"Crenshire—" he took her arm and guided her into a formica-paneled alcove; a bored orderly rumbled a gurney past their heels. It left whiffs of antiseptic and anesthesia in the cool air "—I've been watching you for months."

"Oh?" she asked, coldly, to cover her sudden uneasiness. How much had he guessed? "And what have you seen?"

"I've seen you coax them back, dammit. Now, that old man in there is dying, but if you'd go in—"

She stopped listening, relieved; he had it all backwards

anyway. Perception is not influence. Can a stethoscope urge on a flagging heart?

"—know you've got a lot of responsibilities, but if you'd just—"

Oversee the decay? Make sure the rainbow-hued aura dissipated properly? Didn't he know personal involvement with morgue-meat *hurt*?

"—look, I have a goddam chart, for Chrissakes, showing every patient you've spent extra time with, and not one—not one—of them died, not as long as you were still seeing them."

"And you think I'm responsible?" She didn't like the way he was clinging to his insight. Given time, he might work out the truth.

He grimaced. "Look, there is a very fine line—I shouldn't have to tell you this—very fine, between life and death, and it's easy, pitifully easy, to cross. You've got to give them a reason to stay put. And you—dammit, Crenshire, you give them that reason. I know you do. I've got charts."

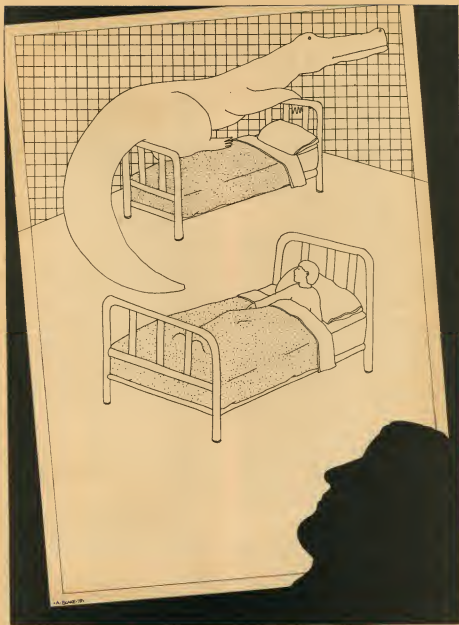
The charts would make it difficult. Without them, she could suggest—obliquely, of course—that his memory had seized on the successes and ignored the failures. With them, she couldn't. She'd had no "failures." His charts were correct—but misinterpreted.

"Do you attribute their survival to me, Doctor?"

"Yes, I do."

"Solely to me?"

His mouth opened, then shut again as he pondered the implications of her question. Strangely, his after-shave was more noticeable in silence. At last, "Not sole, Janie—" he used her first name tentatively, as if hoping a personal rapport would bring them together professionally "—I do a lot for their bodies, but somebody's got to take care of their... their spirits, you know? That's what counts. Christ, I've had cases come through the ER looking like so much hamburger—but if the spark hasn't gone out, if they want to keep it going—then they live, dammit. And you've got some kind of..." His face screwed up in a parody of thought as he searched through his medical dictionary for a word that wasn't there. "Some kind of power, or talent, for keeping the sparks lit. That's what I'm asking. Go in to old man Tomiglio, keep his spark going. Okay?"



Medicine was cold enough as it was. It had been regimented and programmed until the hospital had become an impersonal, heartless super-organism. Did the world need more of that?

She wanted to explain that her "power" affected no one but herself—that all it did was relax the automatic defense mechanism that would otherwise keep her from caring about people who might die—but she couldn't. She knew what would happen if she did. "Doctor, it won't—" catching her lower lip between her teeth, she tried to find a line that would be convincing yet concealing. "Doctor, I spent time with patients I like. Since I don't short-change the others, I think I have a right."

Removing his wire-rimmed glasses, he rubbed the bridge of his nose with thumb and forefinger. His naked eyes looked very vulnerable. "And you don't like Tomiglio?"

"It's not that I dislike him—"

"You can condemn him to death simply because you're neutral about him?"

"No, of course not! But..." Gesturing limply, half in reflection of her confusion and half as comment on the futility of arguing with a made-up mind, she tried another tack. Carefully, she said, "If I do affect the patients' morale, it's because they know I like them. Now, Mr. Tomiglio—"

"—needs to be liked, right?"

"No!" Impatiently, she shook her head; her soft brown hair whisked gently across her shoulders. "I mean, everybody needs to be liked, yes, but—" taking a deep breath, she idly noticed that her uniform was getting tight again—"they're not dumb, Doctor. They can see right through a pose. If I hovered over him, dripping concern and all that Florence Nightingale crap, he'd know I was pretending. They always do, they can tell."

"In my experience—" he pointed a finger at her, and wagged it as though he were her father—"most cases are too absorbed in themselves—"

Again she tuned him out. She donned the mask, the one all nurses wear when a doctor belabors the obvious. It made her seem attentive and interested; it demonstrated, almost by the way, just how unperceptive he really was.

What did he know about the reality, the totality, of sickness? Even though he was one of the better staff physicians, he saw too little. To him, Tomiglio was no more than an array of symptoms, each to be measured against a series of known parameters. Quantify, that was the word, that was what he did. He reduced everything to numbers and then was blind enough to assume that the numbers were all there was.

Few of the doctors knew the wincing, the hoarse voices, the suddenly moist eyes. Most hurried through—pump, count, poke, read, chart—and then were gone. Afterwards, they had the nerve to wonder—"why'd that old guy—what's his name? ah...ab...never mind, not important—the one in 714, with the cysts, why the hell'd he Brady like that? Gotta see the autopsy on that, see what I missed. Coulda sworn I didn't, though—I mean, I worked him up good."

Becoming aware that he was waiting for her to speak, she ran backwards through her memory to see if it could echo his

question. No. Gone. "I'm sorry, Doctor," she said, glancing meaningfully at her watch, "I'm afraid I was thinking of something else. What did you say?"

"I said—skip it." Puzzlement, and a hint of defeat, tinged his round face. "It just occurred to me that, uh, you probably can't use this power of yours unless you really care about the person." Tiredly, he shrugged. "So Tomiglio dies. Have it your way." Spinning on his heel and striding away, he disappeared around the corner of the brightly-lit corridor.

"Well, of all the—" She cut herself off with an effort. He'd mistaken her pragmatism for callousness when it wasn't, when it was simply an acknowledgment of limitations. Strength is finite, to be used where it will have an effect. For a second she was consumed by the irrational impulse to run after him, tug his sleeve and tell him everything. She fought that down, too.

Contra-indicated. A nice bit of medical jargon that fit her situation. Explaining her "talent" was contra-indicated. Either no one would believe her, which could cost her her job, as well as her ability to support Jimmy without crawling to her ex, or... involuntarily, she shivered. The alternative was to have her talent used, and that notion put a fluttery dizziness in the pit of her stomach.

She could visualize how they'd exploit it. They'd park her in Admitting with a pointer. She'd read the glittering, whirling, disintegrating auras to separate the sick, the lame, and the maimed into: "Possible Survivors" and "Walking Dead." Regularly, they'd stroll her through the wards, vultures above for the singling out of those who would waste what they might be given.

Oh, the machinery would be smooth and oiled: not a voice would be raised, not an alibi would be missed. The gurneys would hiss soundlessly, sweeping up the imminent debris, and she...

...and she would be the Hope-Killer.

No.

She couldn't—she *wouldn't*—play that role. Everybody would be on her constantly, deferring to her judgment, cancelling operations, halting medication. All on her say-so. All because she could see the—souls?—making ready to abandon the tired bodies.

Yes, there'd be a beneficial side: people could go home to die as human beings, rather than sedated lumps of machine-flesh. The bereaved families would be spared monstrous, useless costs. Affairs could be ordered well ahead of time.

And yet... what did she know? She couldn't prove her talent—she refused even to trust it completely. It was new, of some three or four months duration, and she didn't know how long it would stay with her. She'd look a fool if she announced it, explained it, and offered to demonstrate it—only to have it fall her.

Besides. Medicine was cold enough as it was. It had been regimented and programmed until the hospital had become an impersonal, heartless super-organism. Did the world need

more of that? Didn't it need, instead, caring and affection and genuine, because-we're-both-human, understanding?

THE METAL VOICE that lived in the ceiling awakened to call her name. Recognizing it as a power higher than herself, beyond appeal or even dispute, she obeyed. Her rubber soles made brisk, efficient sounds as they patted the shining linoleum; catching a colorless image of herself in the glass of a windowed door, she pushed her hair into place without slowing down.

Martha Fedorchuk stood behind the desk, reviewing a sheaf of medication instructions. At Janie's approach she looked up, and called: "Your friend down the hall's been asking for you." Her blue eyes darted to the patient list to pick up the name. "Terry, in 318."

"Thanks, Martha," she said, pausing only to ask, "did he say why?"

"Huh? Oh, no, just that he wanted to see you when you were free."

"Thanks," She moved along the cross-corridor, letting her feet find her destination while her mind methodically refreshed itself on Terry's situation.

He was thirteen, blond, with the quick laugh and roving curiosity of the well-adjusted child. He'd fallen out of a tree, his backyard Everest; he'd somehow escaped multiple fractures, but the branch that had broken his fall had also seriously damaged his kidneys. The dialysis machine would support him until they recovered—or until he received the transplant which every member of his family had offered—and he'd seemed to be coming along nicely.

She pushed open his door. Resignation slapped her in the face. Her eyes widened, criss-crossed the small room instinctively. Her nurse nose sniffed for the smells of sickness; there were none. But Terry lay alone in a rippling blue pool of gloom that bordered on—

"No," she whispered in alarm, "no, not Terry."

Two steps took her to his bedside; gently, her index finger prodded his ribs. It was a game they played—he'd claimed, the day he was admitted, that she couldn't work for the hospital since she didn't poke him like everybody else. So she'd said, "I knew I forgot something!" and immediately shoved her finger into his side. He'd laughed, and it had become their joke.

"Stop it," he whined, "that hurts." His eyes were puffed shut, as though he'd been rubbing them; his face was flushed and hot.

"Martha said you wanted to see me." It was all she could do to keep her voice even: his aura, expanding visibly, was already past the point of no return. He'd given up. He was going to die. She could not reverse the process.

"I don't feel good," he complained.

His chart was in her hand—she must have picked it out of its box as she came through the door, although she didn't remember having done so—and she skimmed it quickly. According to its cramped notations, all signs were normal. "Would you like me to call the doctor?"

"No," he said sullenly, "he just makes me hurt more."

She licked her lips. The atmosphere was so oppressive that she wanted to flee. Terry's surrender had made everything futile—all her friendliness, all her visits, all her games and jokes and boredom-breaking gambits—all gone to waste because his thirteen-year-old spirit just hadn't been strong enough to bear the burden of his ruptured kidneys. She wasn't needed any more. Nor was she wanted—he'd made

his choice, albeit unknowingly, and he'd chosen to reject her. So... "Would you like me to call your mother?"

"I want you to make me better," he wailed suddenly. "Janie, please—I feel so awful—please make me better again."

"But, I—" How can you tell a child that there's nothing you can do? Her fingers lay on his forehead, and brushed back wisps of damp straw. Heart heavy, she braced herself. Disengaging her affections would be painful, but leaving them invested in a boy fated for the morgue would be devastating.

"Please!" he demanded, before she could do or say a thing.

"Terry, I—" Stalling, she walked to the window, and cranked it open. Summoning a doctor would be to no avail—he'd only express optimism, unless she explained her talent, in which case he'd be skeptical, and probably disapproving. But Terry's aura was spreading into the fresh spring air, and its foci were beginning to disassociate themselves from each other, and— She dropped abruptly to the edge of his bed, murmuring, "I'll do what I can," while her amazed mind gawked at her emotional decision.

But what could she do? She had no control over the fading of his aura—it emanated from him, it was directed by him—yet if she could make him wad it together, suck it back inside where it belonged... "Did I tell you I have a little boy?" she asked.

"Yeah," he muttered, tossing his head as if looking for comfort.

"Did I tell you what he does for fun?"

His swollen eyelids parted to reveal glazed green eyes. "No."

"Well, he—" Just in time, she remembered the difference in ages, and the vast gulf that would separate their interests. What amused Jimmy would only bore Terry.

"What's he do?"

She'd have to make something up, something that would... that would cut through his fatigue and resignation, that would give him cause to outlast it. "Well," she said, "he— he dug a hole in the backyard, and he filled the hole with water, and—"

"And he goes swimming in it?" His tone said a rich suburbanite didn't think very much of any kid who'd have fun paddling around in a mud-puddle.

"Oh, no! The alligators would get him if he did that."

"The alligators?" For the first time, his eyes opened all the way.

"Yes. His uncle was down in Florida, and he sent us some alligator eggs, and they hatched, and now—"

"Why do they stay in your backyard? Why don't they run away?" He made a weak effort to lift himself up on his elbows.

Sliding the pillow under his shoulders, she invented, "We put a fence around the hole, so they can't. Besides, they're scared of our dog."

"Alligators, wow!" His voice twisted, became accusing. "You're making all this up."

"Terry!"

"You are." He raised a trembling arm, and pointed one thin finger at her. "You can't keep alligators in your backyard—what happens when winter comes, huh? You're making this all up."

Theatrically, with a hand to her throat, she sighed, "You're

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Non-Isotropic

Brian Aldiss



HE BOY WAS FIRST SEEN as a distant figure across sand. Behind him was water, then hills, green and tan. Beyond them, mountains, fading to blue, teased by cloud.

The boy was running wildly about a deep pool. As the viewpoint neared, it could be seen that he was laughing in excitement. He had a net which he jabbed inexpertly at the water. He jumped into the pool, to emerge shrieking with laughter.

The viewpoint moved remorselessly nearer, across the bare wet sand. The boy stooped to make a trawl with his net. So close was the viewpoint that the serrations of the boy's backbone showed, white-knuckled. He straightened, lifting high a crab for the inspection of the hidden viewer.

Research Vessel *Bathyscopic* hung just beyond Home Galaxy, its antennae probing forward into the non-isotropic fault. It resembled a malformed spider, with its one extended leg housing delicate instruments protected from the artificial magnetosphere of the ship. Like certain kinds of spider, the *Bathyscopic* trailed a web. The web was designed to catch the fossil microwave radiation which powered it.

A lay brother switched the latest compread-out to the screen before which Priest-Captain Shiva Askanza stood, talking with his chief navigator, Varga Bergwein. Captain and navigator briefly scanned the figures.

"We're at the extreme limit of safety," Askanza said. "There's the fault ahead of us. Nothing for it but to send out the drone and see where it gets us."

"If it can locate Cellini before it becomes inert, we're in God's luck."

Askanza bent over his panel and activated the auxiliary systems which controlled Drone A. The picture on the big screen jumped, and began to yield drone-oriented data as the machine nosed its way forward into space from its homing tube.

From the germanium brain of the drone came a simulation of the non-isotropic fault, writhing in concentric radiation contours shaped roughly like ram's horns. The fault was only some eighty light years long at its longest, and fifty across. Its depth could not be estimated; conflicting readings suggested infinite depth. It was the first NIF to be discovered, and as

shattering an event in its way as the discovery of the Expanding Universe, two millennia before.

The astrophysicist Rufort Cellini had developed the dislocation theory and the math behind it which postulated the existence of NIFs; he had gone out in a research vessel, ranging beyond the undetectable walls of the galaxy, and had verified his hypothesis—firstly, by finding the NIF, secondly by disappearing into it.

Drone A nudged forward from the *Bathyscopic*, scattering a trail over Askanza's screen. The scatter cleared, the reading resumed, the simulation switching automatically from microwave to long wave to equivalent temperature to badron to lepton to photon plot. The picture built up of a customary space trellis with average particle activity for such quadrants.

Askanza muttered a prayer. He found himself breathing more tightly as he watched the drone make its approach to the NIF. It took up a position almost stationary in relation to the fault, and then began to wind in sideways in response to Askanza's remote command.

The figures changed. The readings fell, all except the proton count. The temperature reading dropped to only a few decimal points off zero K.

Varga Bergwein grunted. Askanza shot him a glance, and by so doing almost missed the flash of red on the margin of the screen. It was there, it was gone.

The drone moved up against the fault in a shower of plummeting figures. It entered the fault. Readings and simulation ceased. A brilliant flash. The screen went dead. The drone had ceased to exist in relation to the isotropic universe.

In his ordinary voice, Askanza said into the phone, "Re-run of that please, and the photo-record."

The photo-record came up first, corrected for visual frequencies. Clear through the fault, the viewers could see the shapes of two distant galaxies. The picture was steady, the NIF did not show. It had no refractive index: light travelled through it unimpeded.

When the re-run appeared, Askanza slowed the picture and switched an auxiliary screen to infra-red. When the flash of red showed again, he stopped the film and brought up magnification. There was no fuzziness. Limned in blue, there was the spider-shape of the Poseidonian.

"That's Cellini's ship, right enough," said Bergwein. "There he is, but can we get him out?"

"Photons at least have the same properties in or out of non-isotropic space. Whatever goes on in there, we can see the ship. We can capture it and bring it and ourselves out again—provided our shield holds."

"You think Cellini will be alive, Captain?"

"Cellini was the theorist, the man with the hypotheses. Let's worry about him first and the hypotheses later."

He turned to the phone. "Switch on external amplifiers. Tell the crew to stand by. We are preparing to enter the NIF."

The boy had walked for across the stretch of sand. So low was the tide in the estuary that the channel of the river could hardly be seen from its banks. Several veins of water meandered through the sand, but the boy had now reached the deepest channel.

He was lost in thought. The viewpoint went to look over his bare shoulder and found him dredging pebbles out of the water and arranging them on the sharply defined edge of the sand. The water gurgled. A gull cried overhead.

He looked up and said, "It's glory here. I'd like to come here every holiday, really get to know the play of the tides, see how the sand patterns changed with the season. I just wish you could be here too, Father, to enjoy it with me..."

The man said, "I'm sorry. I'm still sorry. Forever sorry..." He switched off the cube and sat with it under his palm. After a moment, he mastered himself and switched it on again.

The boy planted a big stone half in the river and against the bank, so as to watch the swirl of water undercut the sand, sharpening the miniature cliff. "Too bad you have to be away in space so long. I don't understand your dislocation theory too well—I guess I'll have to be older to do that. Right now, I don't ever want to leave Earth. It's so—it's so inexhaustible. I mean, just look at the dislocation I have here at this bank, between liquid and solid. One day I suppose I will understand the formula for this kind of thing, what makes solids solid and liquids liquid. I mean to understand if I can..."

"Yes, yes, you mean to—for your father's sake," the man said, looking down with furrowed brow at the contents of the cube.

"I wish you were here to play with me," said the boy.

The man switched the holocube off. For a long while, he sat staring blankly ahead. A tap at the door made him sit up and collect himself, instinctively covering the cube with one broad hand.

A messenger looked in.

"Captain Askanza, we are ready to ferry down to Earth if you're ready."

Askanza nodded curtly without speaking.

OMEGA WAS A MERE CHUNK of inert rock some four hundred kilometres long and half as thick. It suited Rufort Cellini.

He anchored his vessel and set up some instruments on the rocky surface. The thickness of Omega cut out some of the background galactic radiation. He made observations. When he felt like it, he walked and thought. Cellini made a point of exercise, and derived pleasure from taking a stroll on the very edge of the galaxy.

When he walked in one direction, the cosmic night was there, intermittently lit by distant other galaxies. When he

turned about and walked in the opposite direction, the great wheel of the Home Galaxy reared up, diamond bright and cruel, ever-nearer light with a cutting edge. From that wheel he received signals older than any light received from the most distant of galaxies to his rear.

Inter-galactic space, he felt instinctively, was a gulf that mankind would never cross; there were burdens of distance too great for organic matter to shoulder. The galaxies had separated as thought separates, to further unity. All would become functions in his formulae. There was a solution to every mystery—even the Great Why itself—the solution that Rufort Cellini had set himself to discover, many years ago.

Certain basic equations had moved into his mind at the same time as the computer of the Congregation to which he belonged offered him the opportunity of a year's marriage.

Intellectual curiosity moved him to take up the year. He enjoyed sexual intercourse, he found the woman pleasant; but he experienced with her the same impatience he felt with his male friends. He could not bear idle conversation—and for Cellini most conversation was idle. He left her before the year had expired, but not before she became pregnant. It was social intercourse Cellini could not stand.

He had seen the child since then, spent time with it on his three visits back to Earth. The child he could tolerate. Growing organisms held some interest as a process, particularly when seen in temporal cross-section, as he saw his son. Unfortunately, the child showed him affection, and that was a claim Cellini was not prepared for. Only his work had his love.

That work, his lifetime's work, was now justified.

Reading his instruments, looking ahead into intragalactic space, Rufort Cellini trembled. He saw as clearly into his own brain as he saw into the universe ahead; indeed, the two views were disconcertingly parallel.

The insight brought recollections. He saw again the first nebulous intimations he had received in his teens that man's plan according to which the universe had been mapped held a dislocation, a fatal dislocation which prevented comprehension alike of the macroscopic and the microscopic and their extraordinary inter-relationship: that the courses of the stars as well as the motions of the particles which constituted sub-nuclear physics were plotted according to a misapprehension which was almost fundamental to the mind of man. He remembered that fear, the burden of that knowledge which set him on a course further and further apart from his fellow humans. To him was given the task of correcting the misapprehension—and with it the basic comprehensions of mind.

Only gradually did Cellini perceive that the dislocation could be expressed in mathematics. But the mathematics which served to carry men in metal ships across their home galaxy was itself a product of the dislocation, and perpetuated the dislocation. He had to return to beginnings and invent a new mathematical language, the Cellini system, to formulate the divergences he began to see more and more clearly.

How lucid his brain had become, isolated despite his colleagues at the institute, despite his marriage period. It had worked without cease. Even the dream periods of sleep were oriented about his one central preoccupation, and were so oriented that they abolished the untidiness of normal human dreams.

Only in space, free of the irritating radiations of terrestrial life, had Cellini managed to complete his computations. He travelled in the *Posidonion* at near light speed, willing his

own generation left behind to age and die, seeing in their death his freedom from all emotional and human ties.

A new enlightenment overtook him. Remotely, he regarded the word "enlightenment" with sardonic amusement; it had been coined unknowingly long ago specifically to describe his state of mind. For in his speeding brain, photons themselves moved at a crawl: his thoughts travelled at near light speeds. There, his understanding and his Cellini system developed. Almost casually, he watched his computer spell out the syllables of the new equations that made the universe a different place.

Two voyages later, he landed on Omega and set up his observatory. Confirmation in the real world of his abstractions was almost immediately forthcoming. He located a non-isotropic fault only a few light years away.

The Cosmological Constant on which all astronomy and physics had been founded was wiped away. The universe was non-homogeneous and non-isotropic. Its composition was of energy in three great phase transitions: matter and energy, which had long been recognised—and consciousness.

At length, Cellini turned away and went back into his ship. His face was expressionless.

Sitting in his favourite chair, he came to a decision. Before returning to the inhabited planets, he would investigate the alien space himself and determine its properties. There was no need for further speculation; he could investigate this mysterious fault, this consciousness, in person.

There was a certain pride in the decision. He recognised it for what it was, a remnant of human weakness. He smiled, idly picking up the glassite cube by his right hand.

Well, it was fun to be a child sometimes. He pressed the holocube. Briefly, a boy ran on damp sand, smiling and beckoning, hardly expecting a response.

PRAYERS WERE SAID in the *Bathycosmic* before it moved forward into the NIF. The prayers were amplified and broadcast throughout the research vessel. Amplifiers on the outside of the ship caused the prayers to be broadcast through space, so that the ship was surrounded by a field of prayer.

Everyone prayed. Only Askanza and Bergwein and other essential priest-officers were excused as the great vessel accelerated gently.

The navigation officer said, "The holiness of this moment! If we survive, I shall go into isolation for the rest of my life, taking the Vow of Silence. Who can speak of such experience?"

Priest-Captain Shiva Askanza was old. The hair on his head was sparse and grey, his shoulders were bent, but he straightened and said, "Cellini delivered not just humanity, but the universe itself from materialism. Beyond doubt, he has proved that the explosion which began the universe happened in the mind of God. So the universe has always been non-homogeneous, contrary to assumptions. We ourselves, our bodies, are composed of the consciousness of God in a phase transition."

"Quite. Consciousness, together with hydrogen, has been the basic building brick of the cosmos."

With awe and rejoicing in their hearts, they fell silent. The volume of prayer about them rose as the vessel moved toward the NIF. The NIF showed like a pulsating green wall on the screens before them.

The *Bathycosmic* entered the fault.

Science and religion became one.

The prayer-field acted like a shield. Most of the instrumentation went dead as they penetrated the non-homogeneous matter. Photon-count remained steady; they had a visual fix on Cellini's lost ship and moved steadily towards it with grappling magnets ready.

Glory moved in them. They were penetrated harmlessly by the fault.

In them was no fault. All the ancient ancestral ideas of God rose in their minds like birds from the surface of a lake. They were with God, with each other. Theirs was absolute comprehension. They traversed original, undiluted godhead, which throughout the rest of the universe had been dispersed thinly. The Lord let his face to shine upon them.

Working in wonder, they reached the *Poseidonian*, matched velocities, secured it, brought it away.

The *Poseidonian* had had no prayer-shield. Cellini's mind had been burned out by glory.

He lay, a still youthful figure, sprawled on the floor of his cabin, clutching a holocube in his hand.

SAFELY BACK IN NORMAL SPACE, back into the fringes of the Home Galaxy, Askanza and Bergwein reverently lifted the body out between them and carried it to the Captain's cabin. The crew, faces still transfigured, looked on.

Bergwein glanced from the youthful dead face to the gnarled old face of his priest-captain. The resemblance prompted him to ask, "Forgive me, but why did you not take your father's illustrious name of Cellini?"

Askanza set the body reverently down and retrieved the cube from the dead hand.

"It would have been prideful so to do. My mother's name was Askanza; she was the one who cared for me. My father could only find the Truth by neglecting all else."

When he was left alone, and the *Bathycosmic* had set its course for Earth, Askanza switched on the cube and watched his youthful self.

The boy had reached the remains of a wrecked ship. The bones of its hull curved out of the sand like ribs. It looked less like a vessel than the skeleton of a gigantic animal. The boy paced round it slowly.

After a while, he looked at the unseen viewer.

"I guess I should be able to grasp your dislocation theory or whatever you're going to call it. After all—solids and liquid, things that don't make it home...The world's full of such things."

He was silent a moment, before adding apologetically, "And we two so far apart. Another dislocation." He sighed. "We just haven't recognised the principle behind such things before. Like it's proved impossible for most people to imagine God, though he's all round us."

The shallowest of waves lapped about his feet.

The boy looked embarrassed and prepared to flee.

"Maybe you don't even understand what I'm trying to say to you, Father. All these divisions...Anyhow, I hope that this holocube will catch up with you some day and give you a bit of company on your way."

Askanza switched off the cube and laid it beside his father's dead hand.

"Too late—as usual," he said. Over most of the universe, God was spread in fossil radiation, too old, too thin.

—G—

Evasion

Bill Bogges

NO MATTER HOW NORMAN CROW programmed the minicomp, the answer he didn't want kept popping out: *Oclusion—Earth Date 2144/8/21/0403 CUT*. Norman wadded the last strip of tissue and let it fall with the rest onto the floor of his quonset. Might as well admit it. The shadow of asteroid 1685 would fall across Norman's Woe, as he'd named his own asteroid, on exactly the date and time given.

Norman glanced through the transparent quonset walls at 1685 pasted against the black sky not ten miles away. What a rotten piece of luck! One chance in several million that an asteroid just the right size would be in just the right orbit to cover his sun completely for just the wrong amount of time. It would get cold, but he could live with that. What he couldn't survive was the loss of power. Every piece of equipment on the asteroid ran on solar energy. By the time the sun would peep around the other side of 1685, everything on Norman's Woe would be dead, dead, dead—including Norman Crow.

His clolendar read, "ED2144/8/12/1600CUT". That left less than nine Earth days to find a solution. He'd already tried everything he could think of short of calling for help. Norman twisted his thin lips in distaste. He'd never asked for help in his life. It was against the pioneer code to turn to the government to solve your problems. Loners like Norman prided themselves on being self-sufficient. They griped about government restrictions so much it was a real loss of face to ask to be bailed out of a predicament.

"What else can I do?" Norman asked aloud. Talking to oneself is a habit one falls into when living alone. Norman had started after six months and now wasn't even aware he was doing it. He walked through the clutter of mining equipment to the curving, plexiglas wall and stood looking at the mass of matter, seemingly so motionless, but every second closing in on his life. He pounded a fist against the wall.

Six months of screwing around with the Bureau of Mines for a license to extract ore. Three months getting the Space Agency to even look at his application and pile of supporting documents. He'd had to re-do them all twice to comply with special regulations of the Agency before they finally granted him the right to Asteroid 1686. More forms, red tape and run-arounds to get aboard a liner bound in this direction. Months of frustration, screaming into his communicator to

the Bureau of Mines again to have his samples assayed and his claim validated. Just four months ago, his homestead time had been fulfilled and he had acquired ownership of Norman's Woe free and clear.

Even getting the name registered had been a month-long hassle of legalistic doubletalk and bureaucratic fumbling. Now that he'd triumphed over man-made obstacles and had his own little world secure and beginning to pay, here was something literally out of the blue about which he could do nothing.

He would have to ask for help. Evacuation was his only hope. No force in existence could change the asteroid's orbit even a hair's breadth.

Norman stood watching a star blink out as the floating mountain gradually moved in front of it. He sighed.

"No way out. I've got to put in the evacuation call," he said. He stood for a moment longer, desperately reviewing everything he'd tried that hadn't worked. He'd even attempted to melt 1685 with his sun mirrors. No way.

Norman turned from the window decisively. "Stop putting it off. Make the black, blasted call! Get it over with," he told himself.

THE CLOLENDAR READ 0600 when Norman flung his mike against the wall and held both hands on the keys of his communicator, sending a warbling scream of frustration across the void to Earth. He'd been in contact with the Bureau of Mines which had switched him, after an hour's hold, to DOT-Space Division. After repeating his story to three officials of ascending rank, he was told his sector didn't fall under their jurisdiction. He would have to speak to someone at the State Department.

Language at State was a little more florid, but resulted in more confusion, more repetition of his story and, in the end, a promise that the matter would be put on the agenda and discussed at the quarterly meeting two months hence.

Norman had barely resisted the urge to kick the communicator through the airlock at that point. Instead, he ground his teeth and started over with the Bureau of Mines. He got a different official this time and told his story again from the beginning. The man was sympathetic and asked Norman to hold. When he came back on fifteen minutes later, he



Tom Miller

directed Norman to insert his license into the fax machine and they would take action. Norman complied. After an hour's wait, a renewed license popped out of the fax onto Norman's desk with a cheery note from the Bureau, congratulating him on his renewal and wishing him a happy five more years on 1688. They hadn't even gotten the right asteroid.

That was when Norman blasted the ears off whoever, if anyone, was listening in his direction and fell into his bunk to pound his water pillow until it leaked.

At 1610, Norman's eyes popped wide and a devilish grin spread across his bearded face. He leaped from his bunk, scrambled through his files until he found the proper forms, scribbled on them for forty-five minutes, then fed them into the fax. It was 1700 when Norman fell again into his sack, rolled against the wall and was almost instantly in deep, peaceful, smiling sleep.

Six days later, an official ship dodged around 1685, now only half a degree from the sun, and docked neatly at Norman's Woe. The space-suited official was surprised to see packed crates and equipment waiting to be loaded. He walked to the grinning Norman, standing with battered

spacecase slung from his shoulder.

"Mr. Norman Crow?" he broadcast.

Norman nodded, still grinning, and started loading his gear into the ship.

"Mr. Crow, I'm from the IRS. This return you filed six days ago contains some unallowable deductions. You'll have to come back with me for an audit."

Norman continued to grin and load his equipment. Nothing was more certain than death and taxes and if you had to choose...

—G—

REKINDLEMENT a celebration

Ray Bradbury

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Come whisper me a promise,
Come sit upon my stone,
Come lean the winds of autumn
And say me not alone.
Come tell me of Tomorrow
When I will come reborn
Forgetful of All Hallows
And fresh with Christmas Morn.
Come say I'll live forever,
And skull and bones not mine,
Come prove that graves are shallow
Where God but saves old wine,
And bottles souls and bins them
In vintages gone fine.

Come say that tombs are balsa
As light as thistledown,
And all God needs is whistle
And we are swiftly flown—
A milkweed ectoplasm
That, tossed, fills Universe
At these Words from His mouthing:
"Stand tall! All Time, reverse!"
Take on new flesh and knowing,
Forget that lengthy Dust,
Rise up in mad bells pealing
In feverings, fresh lust,
To cover stars and shape them
Far livelier than fires,
To honeycomb and seed-wind,
To all that God admires.
Be Son, be Daughter, flying,
Where time stops, start it up!
At every star-hole, crying,
Thrust Life and fill the cup.

Cut this for me on gravestone?
Speak this into my grave?
Yes, future children, hear me:
Tell old man to be brave
While waiting years of fallow
Until with young man's cry
Say: "Ghost, good Time's your saviour.
God will not pass you by.
He'll hold you in His reckon,
All's kept, re-used, all's thrift,
With new womb bright he'll beckon
From old tomb birth Life's gift.
From dust and death commingled
He takes dark flints to smite
And from your bones, thus smitten—
Lo!
Ten billion years of Light!

Capra Corn

Connie Willis

HE'S BACK," SAID BUSKINS TO HOWARD.
 "Who's back?" Howard was very busy.
 "He is. The darling of the Library, the favorite of the TV papers. Over at the Branch with Miranda. The Aldebaran ambassador," he finished, finally answering Howard's question.
 Howard felt for a moment inexpressibly annoyed. When he recovered himself, he asked, "Is he smiling?"
 "He's always smiling. He's not wearing his glasses, though," Buskins added worriedly, "and there's something else..."

But Howard was totally recovered. He notified the network newspapers and the State Department, and directed his secretary to get out the promotional file they had used before, and the new one, the secret one. Buskins was still standing there.

Howard waved him vaguely away. "Tell Miranda to keep him happy. I'll try to get over this afternoon."

Buskins looked dismayed. "I think you should come now, sir. She was yelling when I left."

"Yelling?" Howard put down the phone. "Miranda?" He



"Now?" He could not help it. His face was definitely showing what he thought, and that was that she was going to ruin everything. He hoped Miranda didn't notice.

got up to go with Buskins, feeling really alarmed. The one thing Miranda must not do was yell.

She had not yelled during his first visit, even though the ambassador had spent most of his time in the Branch. He had even held press conferences in the card files. She had not even complained when she'd had to double-check the computer sheets on The First Interstellar Book Loans (headline and two minutes on all the papers.) She had behaved oddly, though. When he was gone, she had said in an odd tone, "I thought he'd never leave." And in an even odder one, "Let's get married, Howard."

"That's the fifth time this week you've asked me. What's gotten into you? You know that—" But he had barely gotten started on his "inopportune moment" speech when she had said, "It doesn't matter now, never mind," and had gone quietly back to her job. Miranda was a very quiet girl, which was what Howard was counting on.

"Yelling, did you say?" he asked Buskins again. "We can't have that. He's too important."

He was far too important, and had been from the moment he'd landed right next to the only other rocket in town, which was the Library's old Saturn VI, full of science fiction books.

It was a natural enough mistake, one which Howard promptly capitalized on. He put Miranda in charge of entertaining him, called the TV paper, and put his PR staff to work on the biggest promotional blitz New York had seen.

The fact that it was Christmas helped. So did the ambassador. He spoke refined textbook English instead of the usual ambassador computer-pidgin. He was young, tall, and photographable, with unusual facial muscles that allowed him a disarming array of smiles. And he had an uncanny flair for news.

His name was as wildly unpronounceable as every other ambassador's. The papers called him "His Farness" and "A.A." A week after his arrival, though, he announced at a press conference in the Branch that he had decided on a new name. Everybody was a little punchy from two cocktail parties, a sit-down dinner, and the Claudette Colbert film festival the night before. They nodded half-heartedly. Miranda, perched at her check-out desk, had frowned. "Why don't you call me Jericho? Won't that make it easier?"

It certainly did. Nobody even thought to ask how he'd arrived at it, they were so hush shortening it to Jerry for the six o'clock papers.

Three days later, with everybody even more tired from covering a Christmas tree lighting, a stand-up dinner, and the Cary Grant film festival, he had shown up at the press conference wearing horn-rimmed glasses. The papers had fallen over each other in their scramble to make the early edition.

When he'd left, the whole city had turned out. His ship was so weighted down with complimentary flowerseeds, potato chips, film prints (among them Claudette and Cary), replicas of the Statue of Liberty, and, of course, the two thousand

hooks he'd checked out, that Howard was not sure the ship would take off.

And now he was back, and Howard had even bigger plans for him which Miranda was not going to spoil with a lot of yelling. She was not yelling when he got there. She stood quietly by the front door, cool and stiff as ever in her high-collared shirtwaist and long dark skirt. Her yellow hair was still in the neat coronet of braids (Howard had somehow imagined her dragged) and she was wearing her glasses, the gold-rimmed lenses set properly down on her nose. Quite an effective uniform, really.

But she was not smiling the faint regulation Emily Dickinson smile that made her the best thing in the Library. And she was tapping a high-buttoned boot with some determination.

"Get him out of here," she said calmly.

"Why? What's he doing?"

"Nothing. Everything. I don't know. He came in here like some third-rate music man, whistling and sitting on my desk. Howard, he dumped every one of those hooks he checked out on my desk and wants me to figure overdue rates on the basis of two weeks and ten cents a day. He... and he isn't wearing his glasses," she finished, as if that proved something.

"It is the job of every citizen to be polite, tolerant, and considerate to those representatives of a universe," he said, beginning with the first government directive and preparing to work his way through to the last.

"Howard," she said again, "get him out of here."

HOWARD GOT, steering the ambassador firmly but pleasantly to his office, talking all the while. When he got there, though, he was not at all sure how to find out what he wanted to know. "Your... your first visit..." he said, and then hesitated.

The Aldebaran ambassador solved his problem for him. "I'm here to mate," he said, and smiled.

Umm hmm, thought Howard. That's just what I figured. He tried to look surprised. "I had no idea Aldebarans and—"

"Genetically identical, to all intents and purposes," he said. "And now that I've studied your customs, I'm ready to..." he paused, and added almost to himself, "almost ready anyway. There's one more thing I need..." He looked up abruptly and smiled. He really had an astonishing repertoire of smiles. Howard was annoyed by all of them.

"Connecticut," Howard said. "I'll send you to Connecticut. It's the elopement capital of the world. The perfect place to ask a girl that all-important question." He looked steadily at the ambassador. "Is there anyone special you had in mind? For a guide, I mean."

The ambassador smiled steadily back at him. "Miranda," he said.

Miranda wanted nothing to do with it. "I just kicked him out of the Branch," she whispered furiously. "Why would I want to teach him about sex?"

"It's not a matter of personal wishes," he went on in a

smooth low voice he was sure the ambassador could not hear. "It's a matter of the Library's good name. We're responsible for his ideas about mating, whatever they are. He got them from the Library's books. It's up to us to keep him from wreaking havoc on the women of New York. Or the men. Or the pigeons."

"So you want him to wreak havoc on me?"

"Well, being engaged to me you'd hardly...and your loyalty to the Library I know would keep..."

"I wouldn't tell. Oh, for heaven's sake, Howard." She turned to look at the ambassador. He was smiling out the window at something. "Wouldn't it just be easier to find out what he's been reading?"

"We are. I've got Buskins going over the computer sheets right now. And while you're in Connecticut you can be gathering clues for us."

"I won't do it, Howard."

"Very well, I'll get one of the junior librarians. I would have thought you'd show a little more responsibility to this unfortunate incident. After all, nearly all the books he checked out were from your Branch. If anything happens..."

She sighed. "All right, Howard. Whatever you say." She turned to go. "I don't think you'll like the way this turns out, Howard."

He didn't hear her. "Miranda has kindly offered to be your guide to Connecticut. It will take some time to clear an itinerary with the higher-ups so for this afternoon, why don't you two just get acquainted?" He steered the ambassador out of his office and into the ball.

"I'll be right with you," Miranda said, and hesitated inside the door.

"I'm already acquainted with him, Howard."

"Well, take him on a tour of the Library or something."

"Howard, let's get married."

"Now?" He could not help it. His face was definitely showing what he thought, and that was that she was going to ruin everything. He hoped Miranda didn't notice.

"I think we should."

"I think we should, too, but after this ambassador business is over and done with."

"Then it'll be too late, Howard. But luckily it's not too late for a tour of the Library."

She was mistaken. She had stood with the door slightly open and her hand on the chrome handle for perhaps two minutes. His Wholly Farness the Aldebaran ambassador was nowhere to be seen.

She looked for Buskins first, but he wasn't in his office, though the computer sheets were, trailing off the edge of his desk. She couldn't wait for him. She did not believe for one minute what Howard had told her, but there was no denying that he was an outrageous young man who could get into all kinds of trouble on his own. She had Buskins paged.

He wasn't in the Branch either. Her college-girl understudy looked at her over identical gold spectacles. She left her there with orders, latched onto five or six stray staff members, and they searched the Library.

No mean task. The New York Public Library (meaning Howard) had managed at one time, don't ask how, to acquire nearly eight city blocks in mid-Manhattan and turn them into a Disneyland with bookmarks. It's a big place. At a dead run it takes some time even to cross from the office-computer complex on one end to the Dickens street that angles, chimney-pots and backstairs, to Broadway and Fortietb. If you start there with Johnson's coffeehouse, it will be a full half

Connie Willis

hour before you can wend your way between the Grace Livingston Hill rose-covered cottage and Cactus Gulch, where the westerns are on shelves cut right into the artificial rock (Howard has always had a knack for *non sequitur*) and emerge into the airy Heidi-Alpine spaces that were once Bryant Park.

You are barely started. You must struggle through a house with seven gables, two garrets, and a dungeon (I told you), the chapel, also rose-covered, a clipper ship, Poppinland, and of course, the main attraction of the whole Library, the authentic turn-of-the-century Branch.

Miranda eventually ended up back there, staring at the card file and the marble library tables, and reading Carnegie backwards in the yellow and maroon stained glass above the front window, and getting more and more worried.

Eventually the ambassador ended up there too.

"Where did you go?" The last word was practically a wail.

"I was with Delbert."

"Who?"

"Buskins."

"His name is Delbert Buskins?"

"His name is Delbert Moskowitz. Howard made him change it. It didn't fit the Library's image. He made him talk like Sam Weller, too, though Delbert says that didn't work out quite like he'd planned because he talks and talks and never tells him anything and it makes him furious. Taking away a man's name. Have you ever heard of such a thing?"

"Yes. Where did you go?" He was comparatively safe with Buskins, she supposed.

"A novelty shop. They're Delbert's hobby. Have you ever—"

"No."

"I brought you something."

"What is it, a whoopee cushion?"

"Better than that. It's a surprise, though. You have to wait."

"Fine. So tomorrow I find a fly in my ice cube. You are not supposed to go anywhere without me."

"Then you come with me."

"Where?"

"Connecticut."

"I don't think that's such a good idea."

"Paris then. See, we need to steal this statue. It's your statue, so it isn't really stealing, but you think I'm a burglar so we spend the night in this closet at the museum and..."

"All right," Miranda said, "Connecticut." She went over to the check-out desk and gave her understudy the keys to the Branch. "I'm making a terrible mistake," she said, and took off her glasses.

HOWARD INSISTED ON A contained-unit vehicle rather than the CMT. "I'll give you privacy," he said. "No reporters," which was an odd statement for Howard.

Halfway there, Jericho said, "Well, I'm ready to have you teach me about sex. What do we do first?"

Her reaction time was so good he almost went through the windshield. "I take it," he said smiling, "that we can't do it while you're driving."

"Now you listen to me," she said grimly, "you can fool Howard with these sex maniac stories if you want, but I certainly don't believe them."

"Actually I'm a burglar. Of course, I'm not really a burglar, I'm a detective, but you caught me trying to steal your

GALILEO 51

Her reaction time was so good he almost went through the windshield. "I take it," he said smiling, "that we can't do it while you're driving."

father's painting and you think I'm a burglar."

"I do not think you are a burglar."

"A college professor. And I have this very important dinosaur bone that you mistakenly gave to your dog. I get tremendously annoyed with you, but it doesn't mean anything, because I'm crazy about you, and we traipse all over looking—"

"This conversation is ridiculous."

"You don't believe I'm a college professor?"

"No. Nor a burglar nor a detective nor anything else you come up with."

"You believed I was a sex maniac."

"I did not. Howard did."

"And delivered you into my hands." He was not smiling now. "The man is a total idiot."

He looked straight at her. She found it very difficult to breathe. "You..." he said finally, "if I were Howard, I would not send you off with anybody. Anywhere. Not looking like you look. If I were Howard, I would keep you locked in the Branch till I could marry you."

"I think we'd better go," she said despairingly. She reached for the ignition. He reached for her hand.

"One more thing," he said. She snatched her hand away as if it had been bitten and put it to her face. "I need to know your name?"

"You know my name," she said miserably. "Anyway, what does it matter?"

"You're not on the lam from your millionaire father or anything, are you? Oh no, that was a bus. I've got it. You don't work at the Library at all, but there's been this mixup and—"

"You're crazy." She smiled at him. "My name just wasn't suitable, that's all. I mean, you can see Howard's point. I was supposed to be Iowa, small-town, Meredith Willson. My mother, unfortunately, had very pleasant memories of Madrid. It just wasn't appropriate."

"What wasn't?"

"My name is Carmen."

"Carmen?" His grin was immediate and delighted. "Carmen? Oh, I can see it all now. He says Carmen won't work and you say, 'All right, Howard, how about Miranda?' And he liked it, didn't he? He never got the joke, did he?"

She was horrified. "How did you?" Her eyes narrowing, "How did you get it?"

WHAT HAS HE BEEN READING?" she demanded over the phone to Bnskins. They had stopped in New Haven. "All kinds of slang and burglars and buses and dinosaur bones. And Carmen Miranda, of all things. Where did he—"

"I'll check it out. Listen, are you all right? I mean, he hasn't tried anything, has he?"

Her answer was maddeningly slow. "Not exactly. Tell Howard..." he was somehow certain she was smiling. "No,

don't tell him that. Tell him New York City is completely safe."

"Where are you going now?"

"Westford. If any reporters have gotten wind of this they'll automatically think of Haddam. And Howard said no reporters."

I should warn him, Bnskins thought after she had hung up. They're engaged after all, even though he is a sneak and a rat and this plan of his is the worst thing he's ever done, worse even than those library fines he never paid back. And anyway he's a very busy man and doesn't want to be bothered and all he told me to do was to call the papers. Still, I should definitely warn him.

He punched the direct line. "Westford," he said, and punched off.

They had lunch in Westford. He told her about Aldebaran. She told him about the Branch and did not even think about clues.

"Well," he said, scooting back his chair, "I suppose we'd better get on with it."

"You mean the tour?"

"If that's all Howard has in mind, yes, the tour."

"Howard didn't really think you'd attack me. He never would have let me come if—"

"Howard is indeed a very clever man. I think he knew exactly what to expect."

She stood up abruptly. "The tour," she said firmly.

"Connecticut," she recited, "has duplicated Las Vegas in many ways and added innovations all its own. It is possible here to rent an entire wedding—aunts in flowered hats, a nasty little boy cousin, a tearful bridesmaid. In addition to that, every shop has its own selling point. Lovebirds and automatic clouds, underwater weddings, hypnotism, authentic folk customs."

"Do they have trick weddings?"

"Do you mean one where the minister wears a squirting flower and the ring pops open with a flag that says, 'Bang, I'm dead,' that sort of thing?" She smiled. "I'm beginning to think you weren't all that safe with Bnskins."

"He says those tricks are the little man's way of winning just for a moment, like his talking in circles. That's why he was so willing to help me."

"Help you what?"

"He has a lot of hostility towards Howard, I think. As do we all."

She went on as rapidly as possible. "Connecticut has been a success because it spends people's time and money while conserving resources. A wedding can take nearly three weeks here, and after it's all over, the only thing not re-cyclable is the bottom layer of the cake. Connecticut has made marriage a boon to the economy," she finished triumphantly. They had walked almost to the end of Honeymoon Street, to a little white hotel with a latticework porch.

"Okay," he said, "I understand all that. But you still

CAPRA CORN

haven't explained this." He gestured at the hotel. A sign on the porch that read "Weddings \$25—No Waiting" flashed on and off meekly in the afternoon sun. "No time, not much money." He picked up a plastic bouquet that was stuck in the hedge and handed it to her. "No glamour. How does he stay in business?"

"This is the elopement capital of the east coast."

"But why do they elope when they could have clouds and hypnosis?"

Carmen averted her head. "Because they're in love," she said stiffly.

"In love? Isn't that the one where they look at each other they can't breathe and he checks out two thousand books just because she is so blindingly beautiful when she stamps the due date and he doesn't want to go home? Isn't that where she's engaged to somebody else and she knows she shouldn't have anything to do with him, but her fiancé's convinced she's perfectly safe with him because she yells all the time and besides, she's terribly loyal to the Library and—"

"Do you have to be such a smart-aleck all the time? What happened to the quiet young man who spent so much time in the card file?"

"He didn't seem to be getting anywhere."

She was earnestly fiddling with the bouquet and not looking at him. "He was mistaken," she said quietly. "I asked Howard to marry me five times that week."

"Have you asked him lately?"

"Once yesterday." Her voice was barely audible. "And twice this morning."

"Well, at least I'm not doing any worse." He looked at her without smiling. "Am I doing any better?"

He sounded so serious she looked up. And once she looked up the rest was inevitable. Her arms went around his neck, still holding the plastic bouquet, and the sign was clearly visible behind on the latticed porch. It made a very pretty picture.

A very pretty picture. It was on all the five o'clock TV papers, including the one she glimpsed at Bridgeport.

"Howard," Carmen said evenly. She was determined to make a real attempt at not becoming hysterical. "I know this sounds trite, but I can explain."

"Don't worry," Howard said. That surely could not be gaiety in his voice. "Everything's taken care of."

It was gaiety. "But the reporters—"

"They understood. They do stories every day on people whose emotions get the better of them. They just felt a little cheated not being invited, so..." She was not sure exactly when the truth began to dawn on her. Near the end of the second sentence she closed her eyes.

"...with another wedding. And when I told them where it would be—"

"Where are you having it, Howard?" No hope of hysteria now. "In the Library chapel?"

He didn't even have to answer. His whole face lit up. "And wait till you hear where the honeymoon—"

"I won't do it, Howard."

"But it would solve everything. Sooner or later somebody's going to check up on that Connecticut marriage license."

"There isn't any marriage license."

"Exactly. So I said Thursday. Two days is all I can allow for mints and things."

Mints and things. She sat down, then thought better of it, and stood up again. "I won't do it, Howard."

"For the trousseau we're going with McCall's. The theme

is going to be pioneer—trailblazing a path to the stars. Checked gingham, sunbonnet. I hope you have some shoes, though. There is no time for shoes."

Her mouth was open, ready to say it again, when Jericho touched her arm. He was smiling his most disarming smile. "Great idea, Howard. Save a lot of embarrassment. We get married, have a thoroughly chaperoned honeymoon in the rose-covered cottage. I'm called back home on ambassador business. And a few months later when nobody's looking there's an annulment. Right, Howard?"

"I see it as the only way out of this unfortunate situation." He didn't look as if he thought it was particularly unfortunate. Jericho turned to her. "Will you marry me?"

She looked up at him solemnly. "I have some shoes, Howard," she said.

"Well?" Buskins was outside the door, trailing computer lists.

"I'm getting married."

He mulled that one over. "Well."

"Any bright ideas?"

"Keep trying to find out what he's been reading, I guess."

"I'm afraid we're a little beyond that." She sighed. "This is beginning to sound like an old movie."

"So it is," he said, and disappeared.

S HE DID NOT FIND OUT what he had been reading. She did not even see Jericho until the wedding. Howard was around, though, looking gleeful.

"I'm going to give you away," he announced Wednesday, while a parade of authentic prairie flowers marched between them.

"You must certainly are not."

"The *Herald* suggested it. Thought it would give the Library a father-child—"

"Howard, that's ridiculous. You're my fiancé. How can you give me away?"

"Oh, and the shoes. McCall's says if you don't have any shoes not to worry. They'll handle it."

"Howard," she said seriously, "has it occurred to you that for all this calico and publicity I will really be married?"

"Nonsense."

"Howard, he was kissing me when they took that picture. I was kissing him."

"And you will kiss each other a good deal more before all this is over. Now, McCall's has left the option of a crinoline up to you. What do you think?"

He was right. There was an incredible amount of kissing. The TV people were determined, the minute the ceremony was over, to recreate the original pose, with the nosegay of field daisies now, and her bonnet dangling by its ribbons. "...arms around His Distancy's neck, please, a little tighter, and that's it."

He was required to kiss her while he carried her over the threshold of the Grace Livingston Hill cottage and once more at the bedroom door. Jericho shut it with finality. The reporters settled in just outside, to Howard's thoughtfully provided *hors d'oeuvres* and teletype machines. Carmen sat down on the bed and took off her bonnet. Jericho looked around at the canopy bed, cushioned window seats, and geraniums. Snow fell outside the window.

"How do they do that?" he asked. "It's June. What is this place supposed to be, anyway?"

"Elizabeth Barrett Browning's bedroom. This is Flush," she said, flicking a wall switch. The stuffed spaniel on the bed

"We checked the printouts, but we checked the books, too, with the most modern equipment."

"I know, I know, looking for extraterrestrial peanut butter smudges. Hurry up and get to the point."

wagged its tail and sniffed a mechanical sniff.

Jericho looked at her blankly. It wasn't Browning he's been reading, she thought. "She was a poet. She ran away and got married."

That silenced both of them.

"Are all weddings like this?" he asked finally.

"If they were, who'd get married?"

He didn't answer. After a while he said, "What's next on the agenda?"

"I don't know. Howard said to wait for instructions." She was looking earnestly at her bands and trying not to cry. "And no funny stuff. This isn't Connecticut. I don't. . . I don't think I can take much more kissing."

He sat down beside her on the bed. "I know," he said seriously, then changed his tone. "I won't take advantage of the situation. You see, I have no trumpet."

"I know he was quoting," she whispered to Buskins. He had hustled in almost immediately with a message from Howard. "He doesn't even know what a trumpet is."

"I'll check it. And Joshua. And the walls of Jericho." He stopped short. "Oh, my God, the walls of Jericho." He disappeared again.

The message read: *Open interview. Riding skirt. All-night shivaree in planning stage.*

She sank down on the canopied bed. "All night shivaree," she repeated. "What a mess!"

Jericho looked delighted. "Yes, and it gets worse before it gets better. You have to go change. The reporters will have a lot of questions."

"The reporters," Carmen said.

"They seem to be everywhere," Jericho said. "Even in Connecticut."

She looked hard at the door and then at Howard's note still in her hand. "Even in Connecticut."

It wasn't difficult to corner the *Herald* and the *Times*. They wanted nothing better than an exclusive. Carmen perched on the nearest memory bank and gave them a smile that rivalled the ambassador's. "You've really been on top of this story since the beginning. Who scooped it, by the way?"

"The *Sun*," said the *Times* disgustedly. "That cheap little scandal show. Why should they get it?"

"Yes," the *Herald* demanded, "what exactly made your boss grace the *Sun* with his exciting news?"

"Excuse me," Carmen said. "I have to do something."

She grabbed Buskins and shoved him ahead of her into the bedroom. "Get Howard over here," she told him in a voice as hard as ice, "and get rid of those reporters."

"But what will I tell them?"

"I don't really care, Howard. If you can't think of something, I will. Like the time the computer sent out all those library fines by mistake and since everybody paid, you

didn't bother to refund the money—"

"All right, all right." He opened the door a crack. "Okay, everybody. Let's go on home and give the kids a break. They want to be alone. Thanks a lot. You've been great."

He eased himself back in the door. "All right, they're going. Now maybe we can talk this little misunderstanding over and—"

"No, Howard."

"You're forgetting your duty to the Library, Miranda. This is the best publicity we've ever had. Not to mention your duty to me. After all," he drew himself up sternly, "we are engaged."

"Not any more, Howard. You married me off, remember. You gave me away. For publicity, Howard. For the Library, Howard. How could you? You knew I was in love with him."

This comment was met by a group silence of some stature. She sat down at the porto-desk the lawyer had brought along. She did not look at the ambassador, who was leaning against the wall, smiling. "Where do I sign?"

The lawyer put the annulment papers in front of her. He fumbled for a pen. The ambassador sprang forward, smiling, and handed him a fountain pen. "Here, use mine."

"Thank you," the lawyer said, through gritted teeth.

"Just helping the plot along."

Afterwards they filed out docilely. The lawyer went out to get drunk, Howard to prepare a press release he was sure he could talk her out of in the morning, Buskins back to the projection room to flick some switches, chuckling.

Carmen gathered up her sunbonnet and the wilting bouquet. "Just for the record," she said at the door, "what have you been reading?"

"I don't know how to read. I'm only an ambassador."

"But . . . what were you doing in the Branch then?"

"I was looking at you."

"I don't understand. Where did you get all those stories from, all those burglars and trumpets and being engaged to the wrong person?"

"Don't you know?"

Suddenly, with the miles of computer printouts no longer in the way, she did know. "It was the *Music Man*."

"Yes, and Cary Grant and *A Night to Remember* and a little bit of young Peter Lawford."

"You set this up," she said wonderingly. "Howard thought he did, but it was you. But why?"

"I think you know that, too."

She was having trouble breathing again. "How did you manage it?"

"Normal human reactions, as Peter O'Toole said to Audrey Hepburn in that closet in the art museum. Although I'm not really sure Howard is human." He took her hands and pulled her down onto his lap. "Audrey Hepburn had to sit on his lap because it was so crowded in the closet. They were stealing this statue which was really hers, but it was a fake. In the end, though, everything worked out. Everything always works out,

you know."

She sniffed sadly. "Not this time." A couple of tears dripped down.

"You're forgetting the part about the novelty shop."

She looked at him tearfully. "Jericho, a whoopee cushion is not going to make everything work out."

"I never said it was a whoopee cushion. You said it was a whoopee cushion when I said it was a surprise. So here we are," he finished sounding smug.

"Here we are," she said miserably, "with all this bad publicity for the Library and Howard will probably send you to NASA or someplace and I'll never see you again and I love you and we're not even married anymore." She began to cry in earnest.

"Here we are," he said more firmly, and wiped at her tears with his finger, "all alone with Elizabeth Barrett Browning's dog." He kissed her on the nose. "Not a reporter for miles." On the forehead, "And in a briefcase somewhere in this huge city," he brushed some more tears away, "are thirty-seven impossible legal forms signed in..." He had to stop kissing her to finish. "Disappearing ink."

"It's too late, sir."

"What is?" It was very late indeed and Howard had had three hours of annoying network calls relating to his "give the kids a break" ultimatum to the press.

"I found out, sir. What he meant by mating. We checked the printouts, but we checked the books, too, with the most modern equipment—"

"I know, I know, looking for extraterrestrial peanut butter smudges. Hurry up and get to the point."

"There's no need to, sir. I told you, it's too late. We didn't find any signs of handling, which means they must have used a duplicating process on them. Or else checked them out and didn't read them. You'd be surprised how many people do that. Why, the majority of our overdues are books that people took home and never looked at, just completely forgot about behind the couch or something."

"Buskins!"

"But the films were very worn. And that made me think of all those other films he took home with him, like the Cary Grant ones. In which case," he paused for effect.

"In which case," said Howard despairingly.

"In which case, it's too late." He was beaming. Why do people always smile when they talk to me, thought Howard.

"For God's sake, Buskins, what's in the films?"

"His glasses, sir. Cary Grant wore them when he was chasing around with Katharine Hepburn trying to get his dinosaur bone back. And the walls of Jericho were the blankets Clark Gable put up when he and Claudette Colbert had to pretend to be married because she was running away from her millionaire father."

"What are you talking about?"

"The screwball comedy, sir. A better guide to mating was never invented. The first one was *It Happened One Night*. Frank Capra made it. It was funny and sexy and totally impossible, though nobody seemed to notice that. They usually go like this: Boy meets girl only she's engaged to somebody else. Then for some crazy reason they have to get married, just for appearance's sake. I saw Samantha Eggar and Jim Hutton do this—it was really quite amusing, sir. You see, they were going to have to get it annulled in the morning and meantime her fiancé's outside her bedroom in a chair. But Cary Grant's put in these sliding doors that the fiancé

doesn't know about and—"

Howard was on his feet and dialing.

"It's too late for that, sir. The reporters went home hours ago. And they're still married."

Buskins left, smiling what he fondly imagined to be a Cary Grant smile. In the hall he put a plastic bug in Howard's water cooler.

—G—

[Continued from page 39]

Do Not Go Gentle

right. I am."

He slumped back, like a desert traveler finding that the oasis is a mirage after all. "Why did you want to do that to me?" he asked querulously.

She shrugged. "Because I didn't think you'd believe the truth."

"What is the truth?"

"No." She smoothed the stiffly starched sheets across his laboring chest. "If you wouldn't believe alligators, you'd never believe the truth, and you'd make fun of me."

"I wouldn't make fun of you, Janie, you know that. Come on, tell me."

"Uh-uh." She stood, patted his cheek—so soft, so nearly translucent—and risked a glance around. The blue pulsations held steady. "Make you a deal, though. When you get out of here, you can come over and see for yourself. You'll have to believe your own eyes, won't you?"

"I guess so," he conceded suspiciously. "But tell me now, okay?"

"Uh-uh."

"Please?" All his interest was focused on what lived in the water hole.

"I'll give you one hint." Out of the corner of her eye, she saw his aura make a hesitant move towards coalescence. She bent over, and into his ear whispered, "I'll bet you've never seen a real one before."

That did it. He was completely, utterly hooked. Even as she watched, the blue sparkles interwove themselves and retreated into safety. His underlying being had finally found a reason to bear the pain of healing.

And it stunned her. She hadn't thought it possible because her talent couldn't manipulate anything. It could only let her see. But maybe that was enough. The subconscious computers that ticked constantly maintained—with a grimace, she permitted herself to slip into jargon—a running cost-benefits analysis. The body could never forget the costs, but the soul could forget the benefits. With her talent, she could see when it was time to remind the suffering soul of what magical, fanciful, wonderful things could lie just around the corner of the future.

"Where are you going?" Terry asked sleepily. It wasn't a complaint. It was pure curiosity, exhaled by a mind that had remembered how valuable it could be.

"Just down the hall," she answered as she dimmed the lights. "There's an old man I have to talk to. A Mr. Tomiglio."

—G—

THE MASTERS OF SOLITUDE: Part Three

Marvin Kaye/Parke Godwin

[Condensed from the forthcoming *Dorbladay* novel.]

SYNOPSIS THE STORY THUS FAR

Garick, god of the Shando, sends his son Arin to enlist the Urihan covens in a decisive war against the impregnable City. His other son, Singer, the child of Judith of the City, he keeps imprisoned for an undisclosed purpose.

Arin's small band, the 'broken circle', reaches their first stop in Karli, but not before Arin has to execute one of them to save the others. At Karli, Arin finds Shalane, the daughter of Moss, now a young master of the inner circle. Though Shalane loves and believes in Arin, the older masters refuse to help Garick in a war where even victory will mean death to their peaceful way of life.

A strange messenger, Micah, arrives from the people called the Kriss. He bears the invitation of Uriah, the chief elder, to discuss an alliance against City. Arin accepts.

The way to Kriss country lies across the rugged Blue Mountains. Even more dangerous, the mountains are now patrolled by City mercenaries commanded by Bowdeen and his brutal, secretive lieutenant, Callan.

Arin tricks Bowdeen, but loses two of his people, Sand and



Teela. Wounded, frozen, and exhausted, the survivors limp into Salvation, the bome of the Kriss. Here Elin finds Jay (Jacob), the man she loved in Charzen.

Arin's people are isolated from the hostile, fanatically religious Kriss, though Elin and Jay meet secretly. The dynamic, Machiavellian Uriah pretends to negotiate with the covens while actually financing their slaughter through his own son, Callan.

His strategy is to keep Arin in Salvation through the winter. To do this, he exposes the relationship of Jay and Elin, a capital offense under Kriss law. For their 'safety', the rest of the Shando are also imprisoned. Elin is condemned to be stoned to death by the women of Salvation. Desperate to spare her, Arin bargains with Uriah, but that powerful, driven man has his own destiny to weave. In return for seeing Elin, Arin must tell him what lies in Lishin that Judith looked for so many years ago and Garick needs now.

Arin smuggles poison to Elin and she dies peacefully. His arm broken by the brutal Matthew, Arin lies in prison, separated from his people as the bleak winter passes, unaware that Garick's war has already begun.

PART III

THEY PLAYED OUT THE LAST MOVES of their game over a map spread on Arin's cot. When they were done, Arin knew he'd be free, and Uriah would have the capstone to his puzzle. Arin slid the pen along a sketched-in road and marked an X. "This is the weapons house."

"The old laboratory, yes."

"Five houses. It's the one with big numbers over the doors. Just inside number seven on the south side is where Jude left the map. A big room full of iron boxes."

"Why didn't she take it with her?"

"She was carried out half dead by a man who wasn't right in the head for a year after. He didn't even think of the map. Couldn't read it, anyway."

Uriah considered the possibility. Skilled as he was in nuance, Arin's face still told him nothing. He could read now only the outward changes in the man. The unkempt beard sank into hollow cheeks, the mouth tighter than before as if folded down over some private revelation. His left arm had not set properly and would always hang slightly twisted. Arin might be telling the truth. Uriah was one of the party that went into Lishin after Judith left and the waters receded. A search of the laboratory had been part of their business. Nothing had been found.

"What's in that place, Uriah?"

"What?"

"We call Lishin a dead place, but it's not. There's something there." Arin searched for the old word.

"Something evil."

"Perhaps truth," Uriah answered enigmatically. "Which surprises us in any form. I couldn't say. To us the place is just lonely, more so because so much of our past is still there—like a rather futile reproach. 'Look on My Works, Ye Mighty and—' improve." He pointed to the map. "Our bargain, remember? What will this tell you? What will it take you to?"

"The Girdle of Solitude."

Uriah stared in bald disbelief. "The what?"

Arin said it again.

"But that's just a myth. A coven song-story."

Arin shrugged. "Sure."

"Oh, come on! Garick doesn't believe that."

Arin handed him the map. "You asked, you got told: a map with three circles, and one of them is the Girdle."

Uriah's mind raced to comprehend. "It doesn't exist!"

But... if it *did*, his mind told him, a man totally invisible in broad daylight, the right man, could walk through the mercenaries, across Mrika to the door of City itself. Except... what man? Who could survive the Self-Gate? Still, the imagination in Uriah perceived the same quality in Garick: an audacity of a staggering dimension. That was why his plan of deployment was so ambiguous. It hinged on the location of the Gridle, ready to swing north or south as needed.

"Who will wear it, Arin?"

Arin paused, one hand on the ladder. "I don't know. Some damn fool with an itch for playing God. Maybe you, elder."

"Yes." Uriah busied himself folding the map. "You are clever; you read that in me. I want to be... more."

He was surprised now, at the end, to find that he would miss Arin, if only for the mind to push against. A tragic difference, the coven mind that conceived itself as part of the enchainment earth, man as flower rather than fallen angel, yet stallion-spirited enough to dare that heaven could be reached if only one believed. And himself, reaching for the same heaven from an earth that mired him too deep to grasp it. Sometimes he toyed with the ancient heresy that Man was really an animal, an ape caught midway in evolution between tree and ground, too clumsy to climb and not yet able to stand erect. Too cruel.

"I envy you," Uriah confessed. "You can go and become. I must stay and be." He did not move or offer his hand.

"Goodbye, Arin."

That was their endgame. As at the beginning, they gave each other truth when it didn't matter, lied when it did. Arin did not tell Uriah that Moss had re-hidden the map before his mind blanked out the horror of Lishin. And Uriah, a day before, had caused his miners to dam up the two tributary creeks that fed alkaline water into the rain-swollen river to balance the acid spill from the mines. The flow grew more toxic by the hour. Even as Arin cinched his saddle and watched Magill ride away—his stiff, unforgiving back between them like another death—the first of the poisoned fish were floating belly up on the low, flooded shore at Lishin.

About half a mile northwest of the last Kriss houses, the river narrowed, spanned by another iron and stone bridge like that at Lishin, smaller, but in better condition. The spans had been resored in recent years as the main access to the mines north of the river. The four crossed in silence under a steady drizzle. The road turned due east on the north bank past a sprawl of ruin dominated by an overgrown cylinder of stone, and followed the river to Lishin.

Better for the men this way, Arin considered. The smudge of road should lead them directly to the weapons house. They would avoid the rotten town until departure. At a steady trot they might raise it just past high sun or a little later, with plenty of light to find the map and be gone.

Kon and Clay rode close, Hara leading out ahead, leaving the trail now and then to investigate this or that sign, constantly sniffing at the wind as it veered from different points. Arin's arm throbbed, the barely-knitted bone protesting the dampness. The air was foul with a decay he couldn't place.

None of them were at their best or near it. The long winter

they had spent indoors, combined with bad food, had sallowed the men and dulled their edge. The horses were listless; Soogee stumbled along like she was ten instead of three. The Kriss probably fed them grudgingly and locked them away with no other care. The old coven sense in Garick's son cursed with a shriveling contempt. He would never understand Uriah or his Kriss, but men too thick to care for good horses weren't going to do too much for their own kind.

He'd hardly talked to the men since his release. The aparthness had become a habit with him. He should share more, though they were glad to have him back—all but Magill who'd ignored his outstretched hand and gone on cinching his saddle with a hurt finality. Arin couldn't blame him; Gill had come too far and lost too much and he himself probably couldn't name all the things eating at him. Let it go.

The remains of the road led close along the river bank, spotted here and there with patches of the stuff Uriah called concrete: stone crushed to powder, mixed with sand and water and poured like corn batter into any desired shape. His own folk didn't believe it, they never did. Sometimes he wanted to yell at them *Circle isn't the whole goddam world. Everyone's not like us.*

He felt weak and depressed and just plain cold.

After Lishin he wouldn't ask the men to go any further. They could follow him or go home, the choice was theirs. It was selfish, but death had a weight that hung on the heart. He couldn't carry any more. Let them take the map and go back; splitting up would double Garick's chances of getting it. A searing irritation jerked his head up at Clay and Kon. They'd have to carry it all the way to Charzen, couldn't even leap from Karli. The best minds there, even Shalane, would be no help at all. *Stupid sons of bitches can't read. Uriah's right; what are we? A bunch of plain people with one extra little fold in the brain we call lep and because of this we think we're something special. We hoot around in a circle singing about how nice it is to be part of the earth while the earth couldn't care less.*

Soogee stumbled; he brought her head up with a sharp twist of the reins that told him he was wasting energy in succumbing to the depression. Kon and Clay were looking at him curiously. He was shut off, hadn't even read the lep. "It's Hara."

Come on. Waiting.

They found Hara sitting on a log a little distance from the road while his horse cropped hungrily at the short new grass.

"Dead fish," he pointed down to the rocky shoreline. "Smelled it all winter when the wind was right." His arm swept over the yellowish waters. "This must be the west run of the Skanna, can't be anything else. Trapped the north run some. Seen it muddy and clear, never like that."

Kon frowned at the turbulent stream. "Old river looks sick."

"More fish down there," Clay discovered. "Must be a thousand. More'n that, Look, Arin."

The wind veered again, coming from the south. Hara pushed back his hood and sniffed, hunter-wisdom feeling at the air, sorting trace from trace and delivering its verdict.

"Not just fish. Something else."

THE RAIN THINNED TO WET MIST when Arin dropped the reins and let Soogee crop at the grass that bordered the broken black paving. The low oblong of the weapons house squatted before him, broken glass windows set in curious, many-paned strips along

the weathered walls, faded numbers over the memorized entrances. 1-2-3-4 close together, 5 in the middle, 6 at the southeast corner. Eastward bulked Lishin with the square stone tower as his reference to the bridge. The dead fish smell was sickening here, mixed with that other alien odor that prickled the hair on his neck and made Soogee hard to quiet.

The weapons house was really five buildings, two north of the road, three on the south side, of which the center building was their destination. Arin urged the mare forward.

On the south face he made out the numbers 7-8-9. He knew none of them wanted to enter the house, to let it close over them with its unknown magic. Clay said they'd die in Lishin. Part of Arin was afraid. The house, the town like an unbared corpse, the foul air, battered his instincts with their warnings. The place was evil, quivering with the full virulence of that trace he once read in Moss like a stain on the mind. But it had been built by the great masters of the old songs, the men who rode under the sea and high as the moon. He wanted to touch what they made, take it in his hands and learn from it.

He stepped down and led Soogee by her bridle. "I'll go in first. Come when I call."

The doorless entrance yawned below 7. Soogee balked at the threshold. Arin coaxed her inside. The roof was partially caved in just ahead, the passageway full of rotted debris and muddy water. The iron-box room was to his left, but Arin paused. There was a little time. Jude must have wandered some, curious as himself. He tethered the mare to a door handle and splashed across the ruptured floor, kicked at a door that disintegrated inward before him. Arin stepped into a small room. Its main furniture consisted of three drawered tables that hadn't rusted much. In one of the drawers he found a picture. The air-tight covering had turned cloudy with age and grime, but it was whole. A picture of the masters as they lived, real as looking at Kon or Magill. His hands shook a little; it was like opening up buried time and looking into the grave. Realness caught on paper! Such fine clothes, so many buttons, so cleverly cut. The woman's dress was a faded rainbow. No one in Mrika could weave such thin material or dye so many colors into one piece of cloth. She was young, even pretty in a queer, foreign way, her lips unnaturally dark against paper-white skin. Shorter hair than Shalane's and combed up in a fussy way that would take a coven woman half a morning.

"I'm here," Arin whispered to her smile. "Me, Arin. City remembers and Kriss remember, but what did you leave for me?"

The picture-people smiled across the centuries, confident, composed. They seemed small next to the table, but it was the expression that set them apart from his own kind. Those minds had never looked as one. The ears had never listened in the forest.

The iron-box room was not new to him but rather like coming home, almost as he pictured it. Many rows of tall files, Uriah called them, traces of rotted, blackened wood pulp from Moss's last fire. Halfway down the long room, the metal door he was to mark. The rickety table. Arin's hand trailed over the dusty surface, seeing again the image of Jude as Moss had shared it. He could almost feel her now close as Shalane or Jenna.

The rain increased. Arin sent a gather-in. Kon and Hara answered. *Clay, you asleep?* The boy answered absently. His mind was elsewhere, listening.

He heard the others in the entrance, pulling the reluctant horses after them. Arin tugged open the metal door and

To see the immensity of it on paper staggered him even in this afternoon of wonder piled on wonder. Three hundred miles long!

slipped into the darkness of the tiny room, his head barely clearing the entrance. Shelves on either side, the highest just above eye-line. He groped at one and came away with nothing but dust. On the other, his hand brushed against folded paper. Between careful thumb and forefinger, Arin lifted it down, blowing away the loose dirt. A large, thick paper quarter-folded around several hand-written sheets.

The other men gathered about Arin as he spread the map open on the table. They shared no part of his excitement; they were bedraggled and ill at ease, saying the horses were spooked and might have to be hobbled. Arin barely listened. "This is what we came for."

The map had held together far better than he expected. Moss said Jude used City magic on it, a metal can that hissed when she pushed a button and covered the ancient paper with tough, clear dust. The men admired it perfunctorily as a colorful object and had no idea what it was.

A picture of the land, Arin told them. Hundreds of miles of it. They marveled: sure as frost one big-assed country. This cross mark is Lishin where we are. "This blue line is the Skanna, but they wrote it different." All the names, the long-dead ghost names sang like faint music in Arin's ears as he pointed them out. Karli, Salvation, they were just tiny pieces of a small place. Look, with two fingers, he could cover the miles. So little the long name stretched clear across it.

"Hell," Kon figured, "Ain't nobody gonna say that more'n once a year."

"Pennsylvania," Arin tasted the sound. "Kind of pretty."

One of the horses whinnied high with fear; Clay started nervously. The tautness in all three of his men leaked to Arin, but he thrust it aside. He needed time with the map, had to send a letter to Garick with it before he started north. Give the men something to do, let them move.

"Clay, Hara: see if you can scare up some fresh meat on that north slope, Kon, break up everything you can burn."

Hara shifted, uncertain. "Ought to cross the river before dark."

"Yes," Clay agreed.

"We will," Arin promised, "but not hungry. We're sick for fresh meat." Uriah had offered a supply of preserved food, but they'd declined beyond a sack of flour.

Arin heard them ride out as Kon went for wood. He pulled the table closer to the windows and spread out Judith's notes beside the map. The three marked circles stood out clearly. Her knowledge of history must have been profound. Beside each circle, in letters that wavered with her exhaustion, she had written what looked like names, though they made no sense to Arin. NEW LONDON NAVAL BASE. And much further south, ABERDEEN PROVING GROUNDS. The third circle, far southeast of Chazren, almost to the sea, was wider than the others and left blank.

Arin struggled with the semi-intelligible notes. Other than eliminating Lishin as the site of the Girdle, they gave him no clue to the circles. There were his three choices, but no two

could be logically ruled out. There was just too much he didn't know, a whole world and thousands of blank years to smother the tiny candle Garick had lit in him. He stared out the window at the dirty river and brooding mountains. Kon returned with a load of wood. The fire smoke made the air acrid before the windows sucked it out, but it was better than the fish smell. Something drew Arin again and again to a page of Judith's notes, a smaller copy of a portion of the large map. She had sketched the coastline and, just inland, a curved line that must represent almost three hundred miles, a long, thin loop that could only be City. To see the immensity of it on paper staggered him even in this afternoon of wonder piled on wonder. *Three hundred miles long!* Arin poured over the map and Jude's sketch. Though his worm gnawed at him to think, neither sheet of paper told him anything. He couldn't think, anyway; his exhaustion and the damp cold kept his arm throbbing. He gave it up, put the papers on the table and stretched out by the fire, bad arm toward the heat. Kon fed another piece of wood to the embers.

"They'll be back soon," he guessed. "Don't want to stay here past sundown." Kon appraised Arin shrewdly. "That arm ain't no way well yet."

"It's not too bad."

"I could kill Uriah, kill them all," Kon stared into the fire, morose, gathering the thought that came finally with a flow deep and bitter as the poisoned river. "Kill them and use their hides to cover up that dirty dead god. Ain't no place anywhere for Kriss. Forest don't want them. They make it smell. They—" Kon broke off, not even sharing the rest silently with Arin, the thing he never understood himself. Cold with the same unshaped fear that chilled Clay and Hara, he wanted now to touch Arin for reassurance, but Arin was off alone again with his map and strange thoughts, and nothing could make a dent in him. He wasn't thinking like coven any more, slow to read lips, deaf and blind to the sense of danger that neared and thickened like that damned smell while they just sat and let it come. It angered Kon; he wanted to scream at Arin that Clay was no fool. *Something's out there. It wants to kill us. We can die in this place.*

The rain splattered dismally in the passageway where the fallen roof left it open to the sky. Clay and Hara would be wet through when they got back.

Arin's leg startled Kon. *I want you to go home. You and the others go home.* "Take the map to Garick."

Kon digested it slowly. *And you?*

"North to Wengen. Not finished," Arin massaged his arm thoughtfully. "You heard what Gill said. All I do is get people killed."

"No."

"Don't fight me, Kon. Elin, Teela, all of them, they hurt in me. I'm tired of dying, and I can't lose you. Go home."

"I said no," Kon reiterated stubbornly. "Gill already quit. What do you alone?"

Arin wanted no argument. Only half of him was listening;

the rest contended with the worm screaming *think* when he was tired of thinking, forming words that made no sense at all.

"Kon, I don't know how long or far. Your horse is sick."

"So's yours, so are you! Arin, smell that air, listen to them horses. *Open up. Feel.* This place just waiting to kill us, Arin, you too busy to know it. I ain't leaving you alone." He subsided on a melancholy note. "What's so much in Charzen, I gotta be there? Hell..."

Think. The worm battered at Arin. His eyes swam from studying the map, the notes, Judith's final cryptic comment: *The deduction is inevitable... three circles, two named, the third a blank.* Unable to sit still, he got up, weaving like a man who'd lost something and didn't know where to look first. "Don't know how far," he murmured. "Might be clear up north, where's that place?" He looked at the map, made a stab at pronouncing it. "Bows-ton."

"What's that," Kon asked.

"Old town. Part of City now. That's how Garick says Jude learned him City was built. Bunch of old towns. Got so it was really just one City even before the Jings came." His eyes suddenly darted to the map, the beginnings of a thought welling up—only to be lost when Kon called from the entrance.

"They're back."

There was trouble with the horses. Arin heard the three men soothing and cursing them into the passageway. The animals were frightened and stubborn, straining against every step. The other two, infected with their fear, fought to free themselves.

Clay and Hara squatted by the fire, stripped to the waist to dry out their soaked, rank skins. They shivered close to the heat, answering questions distantly, oppressed and preoccupied. No game anywhere, not even old signs. Then they'd seen the black thing break out of the underbrush, skittering flat across their path. It wobbled a little and ran into things as if it were sick. Clay had an arrow hooked and let go at it. Thought they'd got a small coon at first. But it wasn't a coon.

"Never saw one before," Hara mused. "Like a coon, but long and skinny, naked tail. Sort of cat-whiskers. Teeth like needles."

"Dirty," Clay shook his head. "Fur all stuck with mud like it lived underground. Full of fleas. Wouldn't bring it back. Wouldn't touch it." He trailed off into silence, but there was more: over the stamping, terrified horses, Kon and Arin felt it brimming in the two men like nausea.

"Had a smell," Hara said at last. "Same smell I read this morning, read all winter when the wind was right."

And then the lep hammered into their minds, pleading, pulling them onto their feet. Kon stared at Arin, not knowing why, only who—

"It's Gill!" Arin bolted out of the room into the pelting rain.

ON THE SOUTH BANK OF THE RIVER in a stand of fir near Lishin bridge, Magill sheltered from the dreary rain.

Strange and unnatural to be so alone. He told himself that it was just a rest for the horse, that he'd pick up in a bit and ride on. The grass was fresh here, good forage and soft to sit on with his back against the pine while his heart contended with the warring emotions within it.

A small shiver of warning skittered down his spine. He

searched briefly for the source. Old spring bear, maybe, just woke up and feeling mean, or perhaps a boar. Magill listened. Nothing. Not likely. Wasn't a game sign anywhere near the river. One more reason to put the first line of mountain between him and Lishin before dark. At least he could start tomorrow on fresh meat.

He felt mean himself for not taking Arin's hand when they parted. Magill didn't know why he had to quit; it seemed he just couldn't live hurting like this. There was a lot of time in Salvation when Arin's mind closed off from them, to sort things out and add them up, and that hurt, too.

The change that began last summer with Arin's mastership and everything since, all the miles and deaths, had sifted fine what he once swallowed whole, until he realized that he had changed as well as Arin.

The warning instinct washed over him again, stronger, raising the hair on his arms. Magill tasted the air. The footloose wind changed every little while; it was north now, bringing him that damned dead fish stink. He trotted up the slight rise to the edge of the bridge, commanding a clear view of the river and the dirty brown pile of Lishin beyond. The low north bank was disappearing under the rising water, frothed thick with dead fish. His senses shunted around the odor, reaching for that other, undefined trace that quickened his fear as his flat black eyes narrowed west along the swollen stream. The two islands—one near the bridge, the second further upstream and close to the north shore—were flooded half over, just scrub treetops in the middle of rushing water. As Magill watched, something floundered out of the water onto the near island and disappeared into the dark green foliage. His eye caught only its movement, but the trebled burst of fear was echoed by his horse. Turning, Magill ate up the ground in a loping run down the hill. The capricious wind slammed the danger smell like a fist into his face. His stomach turned over. He fought the sudden panic, senses straining to grasp at the still-unshaped but rapidly growing terror. He knew its direction now, if nothing else. Coming from the south, and fast. He took the white-eyed horse from upwind, letting it mix his smell with the other, and close-led it up the rise toward the bridge.

The center section of the age-warped bridge had been open iron grillwork, long since rotted away. The river rushed beneath the yawning gap. Only the two narrow stone walks on either side were passable, wet, twisting and canting in places toward wide gaps in the railing. Magill led the horse step by nervous step, hooves slipping sometimes within an inch of the edge.

"Come on. Come on, you dumb—"

The terrified brute fought him all the way until he had to cover its eyes with his poncho. His own smell in the animal's flaring nostrils, Magill inched the blinded horse across the bridge. The lines of huge, strange buildings like rotted teeth menaced him with their own alien warnings. Magill's senses were crushed between the black town and the unshaped thing behind. At last, he eased the poncho off, soothing the horse, but it reared away. He cursed and made a snatch at the reins. The horse's momentum yanked him around to face the river and the bridge just crossed.

His mouth opened to scream. Nothing came out.

The earth had gone mad, come alive, plunging and seething down to the river that boiled with the first black wave, its forward fringes already milling over the dead fish on his side. Only for a moment could the obscene darting things be defined as separate shapes before more floundered out of

the yellow tide, and more after them—
Millions!

—until the water line and the fish were blotted out in heaving blackness from which rose a flat, voracious squealing that grew in volume as Magill stood frozen. Beyond, the river frothed with more and more and beyond those still, pouring off the flooded islands, a steady black stream spewed into the unclean river, drawn by the smell of the fish, fighting the current with a desperation born of hunger.

That's why no game, part of Magill's mind realized numbly. That ate it out.

For half a mile, the south bank had disappeared under the scurrying, scrambling horde. Hundreds, denied room on the living, writhing bridge, plunged into the water to be swept away and replaced by as many more. Tough and shrewd in survival, they washed up on the islands, clutching floating logs and mere branches to float; some clung to the naked tails of the strong swimmers in front.

The living darkness swarmed across the bridge like a cloud over the sun, rapid but not headlong, as if guided by a canny intelligence. As Magill and the horse were sighted, a signal passed like a tremor down to the near bank which rippled like muscle under live flesh; lean, whiskered snouts lifted, read the message, and billowed like a dirty blanket up the bank toward the bridge.

Magill wrenched himself out of his paralytic fear. There wasn't much chance they could catch him if he rode dead away from the bridge, but even as he vaulted the saddle and kicked the horse into a gallop, the thought loomed clear: *Arin and Kon.*

Reining short, he fought the fear in order to think. The weapons house was due west, flat along the river. They had to be there by now. The black things could reach them, too.

He could barely manage the fear-crazed horse; it plunged against the rein, wanting to run north. Magill forced it around cruelly, letting the bit tear at the rebellious mouth, hissing, "You gonna move or die right here!"

The animal screamed and reared, then gave in as it jumped into a flat run down the broken street. All Magill's fear poured into the lep. *Arin! Kon! Arin! Kon! Run!*

Already the black tide was pouring into the street behind him. The horse flew deftly over a deep bole. Magill rode high on the shoulder to give it better balance, letting out the rein to give the horse its head in longer strides, closing the gap between himself and the open land ahead.

Arin. run! All of you—

He cleared the last rubble of the broken street, feeling the hooves dig into bare earth. As he let the horse out to its limit, the green of the rise before the river vomited black, curling in on his front, alive with that shrill, purposeful chittering. Magill drew his knife, goading the point over the laboring flanks. "Move! Move!"

He was completely cut off now, but they were not yet that thick in front of him. He bent low over the neck while the distance narrowed. In the black swarm, single bodies leaped high, scaly tails lashing in anticipation before they fell back into the raging mass. Five good jumps, six, could clear them. Magill gripped the knife tighter. "Ready... ready... go."

The horse bounded high over the first of them.

damp-rotted wood rending as their own horses broke free, Kon, Clay, Hara shouting. And over it all the terrified lep *run... run!*

He whirled. Dashing to the entrance as the horses emerged, the men pounding after, Arin threw up his arms to rear them back. Soogie careened on her haunches, lashed out with forehooves, and charged at him. Arin dodged aside as she plunged past. He made a grab at the loose reins, missed, tried for the saddle horn. At full run, the mare dragged him off his feet. He lost his precarious hold, grabbed a dangling stirrup. The horse dragged him painfully over the broken stone before he had to let go, roll over, rub his torn knees, see the other horses milling blindly at each other and the men grabbing desperately for any hold they could find. Hara managed a solid grip on his saddle horn, jumped high to fork it. He managed his left foot in the stirrup as the crazed horse dropped flat and rolled viciously over him. Stumbling to help, Arin clubbed its head aside as it flailed onto its feet. Hara had the stunned, vacant look of the gravely hurt. Kon cursed, trying to lift him.

"Goddam stupid horse."

"Forget the horse," Arin scooped an arm under Hara's shoulder. "Get him back inside, Clay, Clay!"

"It don't matter now." Clay, standing erect, still as the death in his eyes, could feel it coming as it always did in his nightmares. A sound of choked pity welled up in him, a sound hopeless in its terrible awareness.

The river bank erupted with teeming black life. Part of it swept in a great sickly curve toward the doomed Magill; another part sensed them, swerved their way.

Arin tried to blanket their minds with his command, but the fear was too strong to touch Clay. Clumsily, Arin and Kon wrestled up Hara, regardless of his pain, and stumbled toward the building.

"What? What is it?" Hara mumbled thickly, jolting in their arms. "I can't see."

Arin caught one glimpse over his shoulder as they tripped, slid, ran. Clay falling, picking himself up again. Arin shut his eyes. *Don't look back. Don't look!* In that instant, the picture was stamped forever in his mind, indelible, etched deep into metal with a fine steel point. A million glaring eyes, thin snouts, a rushing advance, yet for all the pell-mell haste, the inexorable, still *purpose* in that millioned gaze transmitting the image of Arin and Kon and Clay and Hara to primitive brain tissue. Even as he ran, he saw them frozen in time: the eyes, the small, naked pink-white claws like a parody of human hands obscenely out of place against the course, filth-stiffened fur. He might have stayed sane, even in the face of the flood-tide of vermin a mile deep, but the other sight stopped his legs from moving, skittered Kon to a sudden halt, grabbing Hara to keep from pitching headfirst onto the stones.

The shapeless creature heaved like a derelict vessel on the surface of the poisoned sea. Most of its muzzle was eaten away, yet the horse still lurched forward, its leg muscles—where muscle remained over bared bone—bunched mechanically, carrying the flesh-stripped rider that clung lifelessly to the neck. Neither had any shape of its own except the swarming black tide that lapped over them.

Arin felt nothing more after the first of them leaped at his legs, just one sharp pain someone screaming it bit me where's Clay Clay Clay his eyes they're eating his eyes Clay's dead we dropped Hara they're dead they're dead get in there they're dead get in there Arin you sumbitch they're dead get

THE SHOCK STUNNED ARIN for a moment; the flying horse tlay on the fringe of Lishin bearing down on them, the nauseous danger smell making the world quiver with its threat. The sound of

THE BLACK THINGS SCRATCHED and squealed and gnawed at the metal door. When they were feeding, they made a different sound. It seemed important to note the variation.

Arin had seen one only once before, in Lori: the Mrikans called them rats, but the one he saw was big and fat. Not as fast as these. Or as hungry.

One of them got in before the door closed. Kon grabbed it by the tail and slammed it against the floor again and again till there couldn't be a whole bone left in it, his fury and loathing hissing in sibilant bursts of breath as his arm flailed.

The rat lay between them now, adding its smell to their own.

They were cruelly bitten, Kon worst of all. The bites made him feverish after a time, shaking hot and cold all over. Like an animal, without words or reasons, Arin knew Kon was dying.

"Arin," the weak voice pleaded, "how long'll they stay out there?"

"Till they're finished."

"Talk to me, Arin."

After a fashion, Arin could talk. The strange words streamed out of him because the wolf was there, sharply etched in flat white light against the darkness. He must be mad. It sat on its haunches, resting on nothing, regarding him with amusement. It talked to him, but Kon could neither see nor hear it.

Kon will die, said the wolf. He insists on why when there is no why. And Arin knew the wolf was right, because Kon never knew the link between those black little rat eyes and the sky full of stars seeing everything and nothing. Because he can't accept on earth without meaning.

Listen, Kon. The laughter of wolves.

Reach out your hand, Kon. Feel the thing you killed. That's her, that's the goddess. Not crazy, not sane, neither bad nor good, not caught in your rhythms, moving to your music; merely flesh, and under the flesh and fleas and fur is the pus of her we forgot.

Arin, stop. Shut up please shut up.

Chittering down eternity like the rats outside, the song the coven forgot or blotted out of memory, drowning out love, reasons, and irrelevant hopes. Why us in this place, why the rats, why one more meaningless death? *Feeble, self-centered question*, answered the wolf. Arin as center of reality. Not why but why not? If the universe rolls toward purpose, must it be yours? You in your Circle, Uriah in his church, both of you clogging the cosmos with personal significance like sugar on meat, equating the single toad-hop of your lives with the clean arc of Forever. The world carries you, carries the rat who carries the self-absorbed flea. The horror is not an evil, but an innocence. Let the wolves laugh.

"No," Arin growled. "No. Go away, you aren't real. Get out of me."

The wolf wagged its tail, but looked sad. *You haven't taken that last step. Arin. You haven't broken yet.*

Time passed, a long time. A little of his mind came back, recognized how he was now. The bites burned in his flesh. He stretched out a hand for Kon to pull him back to sanity. "Kon." He hardly recognized the creaking sound as his own. "Help me."

"Stay back." The other voice was weak, thick. "Stay off."

Arin. I got plague."

Instinctive fear. He recoiled from Holder. Not Holder, no: Kon. But Holder couldn't come back. He was apart and had to die that way. Holder. NotKon, Not Kon.

"That's what it is, Arin. Hot and cold. Tongue all swelled. You... you off in your head someplace plain crazy, talking to wolves, talking Old Language. Me, nothing to do, just lie here, think, feel it coming."

His breathing labored over the counterpoint of rat-sounds.

"Those black things did it," Kon rasped. "The one Clay shot, he said it was sick, all swelled up, couldn't walk right. Half dead when he got it. Garick wants to know where plague comes from, you tell him what Kon thinks."

"Can't be, Kon. Bit me, too, but I'm not sick."

"Just crazy. Tell him, you hear?"

Little by little, speech grew too difficult for his swollen throat. Kon lepped faintly. Thirst bothered him. He tried to stretch out, but there wasn't room. Still he lepped, more to keep contact with life than anything else. His silent voice simmered like a forgotten cooking pot in Arin's mind, still working and working in the action of its own heat. Now and then Kon made sense. He was trying to accept his own death, trying to understand it. Once Arin heard him sob.

It will only be a little while till he asks the Question, the wolf said in detached pity, only a little while till he breaks on that lost betrayal that was never a promise. Why has he been forsaken? Even Uriah's god asked and got no answer. No wonder they carved him howling. Thief, give it back!

Yes! That was the word, the accusation Arin wanted, had been looking for. The rage seethed in him. *Give them back to me! They were mine, part of me, part of my love. You have no right to take them!*

Who? asked the wolf. Who has no right?

Arin brushed the dead rat aside, dragged himself the distance in the rank darkness to cradle Kon in his arms, to keep him warm. The shuddering arms were too weak to push him away. Even as he held Kon, he wanted to shut out the lep that faltered through his mind, but he couldn't. Kon had no other hold on life but that frayed thread unraveling in his own mind, unwinding in a pile of irrelevant wisps.

Such a Kon—forever lonely, strong only because he met up with life, compromised with it, always constant—never knew what a mother was or a father, plague got them, too. From the beginning, there was only one he could clutch, only one to follow, only one to love, the center of his solitary life. Women, they meant nothing, they never mattered, who was he to love them so late? Uriah, shrewd weigher of men, was right after all. Kon loved Arin. *And old Arin got me killed.*

Kon, I'm sorry, I'm—

Got off of us born again. But it was funny when a man came down to it: they all had it better than Arin. Gill, Elin, Holder, Teela, Clay, Sand, Hara, Kon—all of them died wondering why, still able to wonder, hoping, feeling. Poor Arin got to live with all the questions he can't figure, like the map and Jude's writings. *Poor Arin, poor damn fool, what you gonna do without me?*

"Give them back!" Arin sobbed, holding him. "Give them back to me."

Who? asked the wolf again.

Or take them whole. Don't leave them like sores in my brain. You liar, you thief, take them proud, in dignity. Take them on their feet, not crumpled and whimpering.

The wolf's tongue lolled out. *You're not there yet. Death is still a person, an enemy, a god or goddess to be fought for all*

The pile of rags shifted closer. Its smile was horrible. "Elder, I'd love to kill you."

"Go ahead."

of them. Pride? Dignity? Who the shit cares for those when Koen would trade both for one more breath? They all would. Ask the rats for dignity. *Let go, Arin, let go or be crushed by it!*

With his last howl of denial, his mind snapped. Arin crouched unmoving in the darkness long after the body in his arms ceased its final convulsion; conscious of every sound and smell, he sensed everything from a great distance. He couldn't love the body or mourn it, couldn't hate the thinning, fading sound of the rats. He didn't hurt, needed nothing, not even purpose. And the exhilarant lightness, he knew, was the ultimate step, taken at last. He was free, and quite mad.

And then—precisely then—the phantom wolf rose off its haunches, slouched closer to touch its nose to his. Its fathomless eyes held knowledge that would have been bleak without the tinge of laughter; wolf-laughter at the cruel joke of the world that made it lit with meaning.

Not mad, Arin. Now you're there. Now you've learned. Say it.

"Random."

Say it all.

"Random universe."

Again.

World without meaning beyond its existence.

"Without meaning."

Ego irrelevant?

"Yes."

Now, said the wolf, meaning has meaning. Build, make your own, clean as the arc of Forever.

Arin, the wolf whispered, fading, you've just gone solo.

He pushed at the door. It swung open on bright sunlight. He hinked against the painful glare, crawling out of the closet to stand on aching, cramped legs. The floor was strewn with dead rats, some torn apart by others in their feeding frenzy, some whole but swollen and stiff in the last agony of the plague that killed them. Near the entrance was the clean-picked skeleton of Hara where he'd writhed out of Arin's arms with the rats at his face. Arin stood by the cold remains of their fire. His blackened lips moved in ironic greeting.

"Welcome to the world, Arin."

ELDER MATTHEW considered himself a simple and devout man. He carried out his labors unquestioningly, even when they were harsh, remembering the terrible sword wielded in battle by the Archangel, and knew that all things would be cleansed at last in glory. His only vanity was a modest wish that someday he might be rewarded for his work with a holy vision.

He slowly turned his huge hulk and surveyed the carnage with a satisfaction that lay as much in its justice as its total efficiency. All four: one mingled with horse-bones a little way

off, a second pile clean of flesh in the courtyard and the third skeleton just inside the door. One floating corpse in a closet where he'd managed to escape the rats but not what they carried.

He expected the fifth who'd ridden alone would be found eventually on the south bank. Matthew found no papers or map: Uriah would be disappointed, but he cared little. His business lay with the rats.

Most of them died fighting for food. Matthew and his men chose only those that succumbed to the disease they carried, obesely swollen and reeking. The steel and glass instruments were unwrapped, needles fitted, the gathering commenced. Into the distended rat mouths and throats, under the heart, the needles probed and drew out the mixtures of diseased blood and liquefying tissue to be sent abroad in the unsuspecting blood of crows, those nomad hunters sometimes granted a charitable meal and a night's rest; or in various game animals known to range south; or in drinking water or any other carrier that might come in contact with the covens. God's scythe to cut down the witches, the heathen, as it was given to Moses in Egypt. Sometimes it claimed a few, sometimes many; the last time it had nearly extinguished the Shando; this time it might totally succeed. The rats were plentiful and the strain had grown as virulent as God's own anger.

Bright sunlight lit their work like a smile from Him. Matthew sent the other Kriss back to Salvation with their gathering, staying to work alone out of preference, warmed by the sun and even more by the holiness of his task, moving from carcass to carcass, replacing needles with meticulous care, storing the virus in glass vials. The land about him was more than usually devoid of life, extremely quiet. He worked on, realizing as he did that the joy and devotion in his soul were mounting by perceptible degrees to euphoria. Not even in church in the most consummate moments of ecstatic involvement had he felt so near to the Presence as here at his chief work. The sun waxed golden over the stilled river, hating Matthew in a warmth that reached deep into his spirit. Kneeling by the swollen rat, he paused before inserting the needle and closed his eyes in prayer.

A sudden breath caught in his throat, a sob of joy. The Presence was overwhelming in its power. Matthew knew before his eyes hinked open that He would be there before him in reality as in the countless fantasies of a devout lifetime; the cross, the beloved Saviour in the agonies of His fore-ordained death.

He was right.

Matthew was transfixed in his attitude of prayer. He could scarcely breathe. Bathed in deep golden light, the Saviour hung on His cross before Matthew, eyes still turned to heaven, the lips parted in their last supplication. Unable to move, Matthew's eyes welled with tears—a function that stopped abruptly as His parted lips opened wider and wider till they gaped in a cavernous yawn. The head turned and

avored Matthew with a tolerant smile.

"Hello, Matthew. Having fun?"

The elder gaped. He might have fainted but he couldn't. Nor would his mouth work or his eyes close. He could only watch.

"More fun than I am," the carved figure confessed with a hint of peevishness. "It's fine to be an object of adoration. That's my function. I don't mind being prayed to, or even those hysterical women fondling me in secret as if all my divinity lay beneath this amorphous pair of drawers." The god sighed with plaintive boredom and yawned again, wider. "Oh...on...my."

Matthew's eyes bulged; his locked fingers whitened. He could not even tremble.

"I mean," the voice went on, "these things go with the position. *That's* my complaint; the position. Day in, year out, rain, shine or flood, hung up here like the wash. Why couldn't you show me lying down once in a while? More dignified and much more restful." Restrained as he was, the vision did his unsuccessful best to ease his arms. "Well...the wages of deity."

Matthew found a muscle or two that responded to earnest will. His mouth quivered open. "What...?"

"Oh, I know; my own grievances are petty." The icon regarded Matthew with a fatigued benevolence. "You want a voice of thunder to fill all creation, a prophecy to be graven on mountains." A vast sigh. "They all do. All right."

The explosion cracked the same world asunder. Matthew's eardrums shrieked as the blue sky split prismatically into every color of the spectrum, fading quickly to normal again. Over the thunder, a great, sublime chord rolled from a thousand unseen throats. The god reassumed the classic cast of suffering.

"*Unto ye is given evil tidings, for the Kriss shall be as dust flying in the wind before their enemies.*" The image relaxed. "More like it, more in the style? As long as I'm in voice, try this for size."

Again the celestial music and the voice of doom. "*For of those five sent to answer the wrath of Heaven but four have been slain. One only is escaped alone to fry your oars in its own fat.*" The god went on more chattily. "Of course, that one is very blither and lonely with all his friends gone. And the girl, Matt; don't forget the girl you had to shovel up into a blanket after your women were done. No, no," the gaunt head wagged ruefully, "if you think he's had it bad, Matthew, just you wait." The icon froze again in its accustomed position as the voice faded. "Just you wait..."

He could move now. He fell forward, shuddering violently, face buried in palsied hands. "God! My God, I'm possessed!"

Cautious, expecting new horrors, Matthew raised his head. Nothing but the ruined laboratory and the river. He turned. A yelp of fear ripped out of his throat. He recoiled and cried out again in physical pain, his back seared by white heat. Nothing but air, and yet the heat walled him in, restraining him in every direction. Just beyond it a huge, brown-black wolf lounged on its belly, forepaws crossed in watchful repose. Beside the wolf squatted a scrofulous compound of dirt, rot and starvation, chuckling continually over some inane secret joke as he pawed through Matthew's work bag.

"Matthew, this sure is my week to learn." The mad-man dug at his filthy beard with black, bitten claws, laughing in a way that chilled the elder. Arin held up a needle. "Been watching you all the time."

"In a fever of curiosity," said the wolf.

Matthew hunched in the center of the heat-wall like a bull at bay. Arin was real; his mind could accept Arin, hollow-eyed with madness as he was. But not the other. "What is that-thing?"

"Him? That's a wolf."

Matthew's voice rose to a precarious pitch. "Wolves don't talk!"

"Sure they do. What's wrong with that?" The heat wall contracted around Matthew. He winced. He was not afraid of Arin or even devils, but no matter where he reached for support, his world was gone...

"*What's wrong with that, you fat sonofabitch?*"

"It's crazy!"

"That's a narrow view." The wolf glided off its haunches, passing unscathed through the heat wall. "Here, feel me." It licked Matthew's hand. He jerked it away. He blinked; the wolf-form wavered now and then as if inclined to reform, second to second, or fade out altogether. "I'm a Lishin wolf."

"There are no wolves here!"

"Somewhere else, then." The canine equivalent of a shrug. "There's always a Lishin, over the river, over the years. Pragmatism doesn't help."

The madman turned the filled needle before his eyes. "Kon was a long time dying. But before he did, before the boils broke out, while I could still understand him, he figured the plague comes from the rats. Like the ones you've been sucking on with these pretty little things." He revolved the tube before his sunken eyes. "Mymym. All of a sudden..."

"Like a clear light," the wolf grinned. "We knew you were the man to tell us."

Matthew quelled his trembling with an effort of will. "I do God's work. My God, not that thing your spells put in my brain. My soul is beyond you. I know nothing."

The pile of rags shifted closer. Its smile was horrible. "Elder, I'd love to kill you."

Matthew labored to breathe, certain of death. The scene had a garish, sunlit clarity, the rat-strewn stone paving, the hawks wheeling overhead, the mundane world beyond. He answered the hollow stare with steady eyes. "Go ahead."

"No, not you. Not that easy, not for a long time. It's too hard getting into a Kriss mind, but you, Matt, you've been an education. You've always prayed for a vision. I gave you one—and sort of poked around your imagination at the same time. Your mind is a mess."

"Chaos," the wolf agreed.

"I wonder you get your shoes on right five days out of the week."

"Liar," Matthew choked. "A lie before me, a lie and a devil."

The pattering laugh rose again from the madman. "Of course he's a lie. Not really there, except he is. Don't try to understand; it's as sane as the world. We are in your mind, Matt. We can take from it, bring to it—break it in half if we want, but I need to learn from it. You're my teachers, you and Uriah. And I want you to tell him how much Arin has learned." He tittered horribly. "Oh yes, Matt, you tell him special."

Arin sat back, stretched out emaciated legs, amused by his toes wiggling inside ruined moccasins. "Don't look at me for life. I'm one of the dead." He went on, absorbed in the flexing toes. "Don't say you won't tell us, or that you'd rather die. We'd be fools trying to scare a tough old coal miner with a little bitty thing like death."

"Inefficient," the wolf agreed.

"Pure waste of time," Arin considered. "You're not just going to talk—"

"I won't," Matthew growled. "You can kill me, but I won't."

"—you'll beg to talk."

"Babble," nodded the wolf.

"Sing."

"Cry."

"Scream."

"Dredge your memory—"

"—for everything you know."

"And wish you knew more."

"To keep him off you."

"You'll pray for one more second of sanity—"

"Before you lose it. Dying would be easy."

"Trite," said the wolf.

"Too easy. See, you won't be telling us..."

"Not us." The wolf sprang up and bounded away toward the weapons house.

"—it's Kon wants to know."

The hawks instinctively circled low over the entrance to the weapons house, graceful silhouettes against the azure sky. The wolf trotted out, followed by Kon. The scavenger birds *grakked* their bewilderment: it was dead meat, their legitimate tithe, already swollen with the gasses of decomposition—but it moved, decaying tissue straining in tardy response to a center of strong will. Kon lurched forward in a parody of his familiar stride as the elder remembered it. Matthew gagged. His tongue went thick in his mouth and his stomach heaved as the body folded down like a misshapen scarecrow beside him. The boiled-onion eyes moved sluggishly in oozing sockets, the tongue protruded darkly from blackened lips that moved with difficulty around it. A large plague boil festered on the neck. Kon's voice burst corruptly over the rotting vocal chords as he closed cold sausage fingers on the man's arm. "Matthew."

Matthew gave a pathetic sound and retched. He tried to pull away, but the dead hand held him, tried not to breathe, not to smell it. Tried to pray.

"Tell," Kon moved closer. Yellowish pus seeped from his nose and ears. "About... the black things."

"And the needles," Arin prompted.

"Everything," said the watchful wolf.

Straining as far away as he could from Kon, Matthew gasped, "I believe in the life to come—"

"Tell us," the corpse mumbled.

"—that my soul is free. I renounce these phantoms—that's what they are, Arin, you devil. They're not real. They're not—"

The fingers left a dark trail on his sleeve. "Tell."

Matthew whimpered. "Please..."

It was his weak mortal body that betrayed him. Even as he flinched away from Kon, another arm snaked seductively over his shoulder from behind. The hand caressing his cheek was long, narrow-fingered, half eaten away. The bones, wrist, forearm, up to the disjointed shoulder were crushed out of shape, grotesquely incongruous next to the slender throat. The pulped, eyeless face still showed the long scar from the ear to the remnant of mouth. The other hand, as shattered as his mate, moved spasmodically to brush back the thick fall of red hair as she rested her cheek on Matthew's shoulder. The gaping mouth trembled, moved.

He felt her mutilated breast burning his arm. The last

thing he recognized with a lucid mind was the image of Arin, calm, intent, merciless as time. "Because hell was your invention, don't think I can't work it."

"Tell us," Elin whispered in his ear, "and I'll give you a kiss..."

Matthew told them all they wanted to know and more, much more than Arin might have guessed. He was still talking when the Kriss searchers found him. He had to be tied and kept apart in an unused house on the outskirts of Salvation, with two men of high character and markedly low sensitivity appointed to tend him. For Matthew had been an elder, a selfless servant of God who desired only a vision, a fragment of ecstasy before he died.

The Kriss never clearly divined what had happened to Matthew. What he wailed or whimpered did not chill the two unsusceptible miners, nor did it enlighten Uriah. He heard names in the unceasing babble, remembered names of the Shando dead, most often of the condemned whore who came with them. That, at least, vaguely suggested that Matthew was a weaker vessel than Uriah had realized.

At last, they tied his hands so that Matthew would not exhaust himself with the endless, palsied, brushing movements, as if struggling to be free of something that would not let him go. But after a while he stopped, changed, surrendered, welcomed whatever held him with such relentless affection. He tried to bug the empty air, caressing and crooning, fulfilled and joyous that he would never be alone again, that he would be with her always and always and always.

THE QUEST AND THE KNIFE

SAFF, JENNA BREATHED. As masters, she and Garick rarely drank, but now they sat alone in the room where Garick had first charged Arin with his mission and they opened a fresh jug of sida. Across the long table, they shared without words, finished the first cup and the second and filled them again. They drank slowly, deliberately, savoring the liquor as the thoughts flowed between them. Garick watched the emotions riot across Jenna's bleak countenance—love, gratitude, relief—gradually chilling to cold, intense fury.

"We go to the knife."

Garick nodded. Another silence.

"Uriah first," Jenna rose. "Before the Girdle, before City, before anything. Uriah first."

"Yes," Garick finished his drink. "Uriah first."

She left, and he sat there, considering the best policy to pursue, the one that would be fastest and cost the least. He poured another cup and leaped a command for the cowan Jay to be brought before him.

By the time he arrived, Garick was prizing the seal off a new jug. He glowered at the young Kriss. "You rode in here with Uriah's agreement to an alliance. Then you told us Arin was locked up. Now I learn where Uriah really stands."

Garick's tone was low and decidedly dangerous.

Jay stood before him, wondering, a little awed by the intensity of the god of Shando. Garick rose, pushed Jay down at the table like a child and shoved a written transcript of the intelligence under his nose.

"Cowan, how much of this did you know?"

"None, I swear." Jay read the page and as he did, the surprise faded. "But I'd believe Arin. It makes sense now."

Christ! and I was one of them."

"I've given up the luxury of trust," Garick clipped off the precise syllables of Old Language. "I can't believe Uriah, so what about you? You're Kriss."

"Yes."

"They raised you, gave you your beliefs."

"They gave me a God who will never leave me."

"Would you fight your own family?"

Jay bent his head over the sheet of paper, seeming to give it his full attention. It was a long moment before he answered Garick's question.

"My mother made the formal accusation against Elin. She led the women in the punishment. And my father voted for my execution. For the good of my soul, he said, to save me from further corruption. I believe them; they weren't lying, but they enjoyed it; oh yes, I could see that satisfaction oozing out of their eyes, dirty as anything they claimed to punish. This is what happens to the love of God when the love goes out of it." He handed back the paper. "Yes, I'll fight them. But it's not easy to say."

"Maybe." Garick studied him, wary of the instinct to believe. "But easy or not, you'll take me into Salvation." He pushed paper and pen toward Jay, filled a cup from the jug and set it down in front of the young man. "I want a map, Jay: Salvation, the whole town, the way the houses are built, bridges, the mines, Lishin—everything. Have a drink."

Jay demurred. "I don't like sids."

"Drink it," Garick ordered. His eyes caught Jay's; suddenly it was impossible to refuse. Jay reached for the mug. "Because after you make my map, you're going to let me into your mind for all the little things you've forgotten. A drink will make it easier."

Jay swallowed the sids in one uninitiated gulp. Through his choking, he gasped one impassioned, uncanceled, wholly secular oath.

Garick gestured to the paper. "Start."

Later, the god of Shando studied the two maps, Jay's and Judith's, and glanced occasionally at the latest report from Bob Spitt, his spy in Lorl. Three circles, and the Girdle could be in any one of them, as far north as—

It didn't matter yet. The Girdle would decide the end, not the middle. Now there was still the vital, uncommitted northern division of mercenaries to worry about. Callan's cash would spread deeper without them, true, but Garick couldn't afford to be caught in the pincers of a north and south claw; it wouldn't take long to end the war if that happened.

All was since time began, Garick knew, were won with money. He had to dry up Callan's well. When the merc officer found out, he'd throw all his remaining weight with the southern division, but that couldn't be helped. So the orders went out.

Break off and gather in—

Across the vast single mind of Circle a purpose began to shape and converge on the force that wanted to destroy it. More lep voices called and were answered, indecision altered, firmed up. South from Wengen, north out of Suffec, west from the Mrikan frontier, the riders streamed toward Charzen and Karli while the forest whispered the new message to the embattled Karli squadrons.

—at a point three days above Karli at river fork. Garick joins there.

"Except that's west," Deak told Arin, "and we're supposed to go east."

"Then we don't meet Garick." The gaunt Shando paused

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in sharpening an arrowhead. "But who said?"

"Hoban. Callan's getting smart and Bowdeen was born that way. Some of us got to stay east and fool them."

Arin nodded, recognizing the way Garick must have weighed him and decided he was still expendable. While the covens gathered for the thrust at Salvation, a decoy including Deak's people must engage the merks under Bowdeen and Callan. The decoy, pretending it was the main force, would run east, luring the mercenaries to give chase. The whole idea was to give Garick time to move against Salvation. It was a good plan, provided one didn't reckon it in terms of dead covens. The one flaw was in their horses, exhausted as the riders.

"They're ready to drop," Deak predicted ruefully. "What then?"

"Eat 'em and steal more." Arin strung his bow and mounted. "Let's go."

GARICK ENTERED SINGER'S ROOM where he sometimes worked when he didn't want to be disturbed. He spread the map and Judith's notes on the table.

"Get up," he told his son. "Got something you'll want to see."

Singer rolled over on the cot and opened one eye, more in comment than curiosity, but then he saw the handwriting on the time-worn scraps of paper. He sat up quickly and angled himself off the cot and to the table in one swift movement. Garick returned to the doorway, out of reach of Singer's rope.

The young man eagerly scanned the faded writing, then his dark eyes darted to the map. He nodded.

"Absolutely. The deduction is inevitable."

Garick grinned. This was Judith's son, Judith's and his...

"Took me a little longer," he said, not at all envious of the quickness of that mind.

Singer put his finger on the third circle, the southern-most. "It has to be here."

"Why?"

He stared at his father. "You worked it out. Since when do you need my opinion?"

"Just...wasted to see if. Knew you could. Makes me proud, boy."

Something odd stirred in Singer. For a fleeting moment, it was as if his father was no longer the master of Charzen but the exuberant, semi-literate Shando farmer who learned hungrily at Judith's knee at the same time she taught the child cradled in her lap. Warily, he shoved back the barriers against the old yearning he thought had died by the carved tree.

"So you want to know why? All right. Three places the Girdle could have gone. New London, Aberdeen, that's two." He ran his finger along the curve of border. "But both of them are inside the Self-Gate, maybe buried and built over for more than a thousand years. If the Girdle were in either place inside City, you think my mother wouldn't have known?"

"She drew three circles."

"Yes, but then wrote, 'The deduction is inevitable.' Meaning, if it were inside City, there would have been information on it when she was doing her original research. They've memory-banked the history of every square inch of City. So that means it has to be here." He pointed to the southernmost circle. "All the way down in Suffec. Place without a name."

"It's a swamp," Garick said. "Great something Swamp."

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Down where even hunters could get lost. I lepped to Webb—"

"Who?"

"A cousin of Sand and Teela. Webb says they duckhunt the edges of it; once he and his cousins went inside. Ten miles wide, forty long. No way in or out except by boat."

"You could look all year and maybe not find it. And even if you did, what makes you think it'll still work?"

"Your mother must have thought so. She went through a lot for it."

"Yes," Singer nodded, thoughtfully. "Yes. But still... ten miles by forty..."

"Webb remembers a large island, high and dry, deep inside. He didn't land, he only rowed past, but he *thinks* there was something too regular to be natural, something overgrown but square like a big house. That means stone, wood would rot. If it's stone, it had to be brought in. That takes bigger boats than the Suffee ever had. Singer, that stone must have been poured on blocks, I'll bet on it, and no one's poured stone since Jing times. It could be a weapons house."

"Could be," Singer suddenly looked hard at his father. "Just who were you planning to send paddling around that swamp? Not baby brother?"

"Arin's... too far north."

"Then who?"

Garick said nothing.

His son laughed once, then dropped heavily onto the bed. "Proud of me." Who the hell did you think you were fooling?" He shook his head. "Don't bother asking, you already know my answer."

"Look, son—"

"I told you once what you can do with that word."

"All right," Garick grated. "You want some poor dumb Suffee to run the Girdle past the merks? Fine. Only don't think you're going to laze around all summer like a pig in mud. We're riding north. You come with us. I want you at arm's-reach!"

With a long, eloquent sigh, Singer rolled over so his back was toward his father. "You want me," he yawned, "you can damn well carry me."

TIME WAS AIN'T NOW—and Bowdeen wasn't nearly as sharp now as time was. But he and Callan weren't careless that day; they'd only stopped for a minute on their own flank to do a map check. They never halted long, not with Callan pushing to run down the coveners and kill them all, the sooner the better.

The horses were tethered within three strides, the map laid out on the ground. When the arrow whizzed between them, it grazed so close to Callan's cheek it left a slight mark. They whirled about toward the bush fifty yards away, a stand of brownish-green briar.

The only reason they were alive was the empty quiver slung on the tall man's back.

"Wengen," he drawled, "your name Bowdeen?"

"It sure ain't horse-shit," Bowdeen answered, already busy calculating. No danger, not the mofa would be gone before they could get to their bows. It was dumb, stupid. The three of them just stared at each other.

"That Callan?"

The absurdity of it amused Bowdeen after his first shock of fear. "What is this, a goddam roll-call? That's Callan. You wanta get killed, we'll do it for you."

"Jeremiah," the tall man said, "Matthew told me about you."

Callan unfroze, clawed the bow from his gear, set an arrow, but the covenor was already gone. "Get him," he yelled, mounting. Bowdeen grabbed his bridle.

"Man, where's your brain? Go after him in that bush? He ain't alone, they're never alone."

Callan yanked at the reins. "That bastard aimed at me. Let go!"

Bowdeen held on. "Sub, you get down off that horse *now*. That's an order." The commander waited, jaw clamped in stubborn determination, till Callan reluctantly obeyed.

"That's better." He stared thoughtfully eastward. "You thinking that's who I'm thinking?"

"That's him?"

"Thought you said he was dead."

Callan shrugged, too busy deciding whether he should chase or try to get word to Uriah.

"What's be worth now?" Bowdeen asked.

"Ten krets."

Bowdeen's eyes widened. Maybe Arin was old Garick's number-two son, but if Callan was offering ten krets for his hide, it didn't matter who he was. Ten krets was more than money. It was prime steak—and the stove to cook it on.

"All right, sub, we know for sure which way that mofa's moving. We follow slow and easy. Slow and easy, hear? Because there ain't much farther he can run."

Callan nodded, thinking of his last talk with Uriah, how his father seemed almost reluctant to rid the earth of the dirt from Shando.

Arin first.

EAST. FIFTY MEN, TWENTY WOMEN. More buried. They ate raw horse, first the merks' and then their own when those fell. East—till Arin and Moss stood on the last rise with the broad river spread before them and, beyond it, smoke curling from Mrikan chimneys. Their faces were sunburnt to dark leather under layers of dirt, and their filthy deerskins crawled with ticks and woodlice. Their quivers were empty. They passed the chunk of pinkish, fibrous meat between them, chewing slowly in rhythm with their thoughts.

"What now?" Moss asked Arin.

"Scatter north. Two or three together, I guess. We're done, Moss. Can't do any more."

Today would probably be the end; today he would die. Or not. Like the flea on the fur of the rat, he'd try to go on living, but why wasn't any too clear. Meantime, whether he died or not, Garick would probably take the Kriss, would or would not find the Girdle, then use it to shove some poor sonofabitch—probably big brother who always meant more to him—smack through the Self-Gate and into City that wasn't even at war with them.

But it was good, at least, to be with Moss who read him deeper than lep, who shared the strange stillness and cold he felt. And other feelings. Like hating the rain that brought back the fear-smell and the darkness, and the horror of closed-in places and the sound of too many birds.

Moss understood.

Garick was a day south of the meet-point when the lep came. He heard it and rode back to Singer, who was tied on a mare. Good as his word, he hadn't budged a step. His father had to roll him up thick in homespun and sling him over his shoulder to get him to the horse.

"Hope you're happy," he grated. "Wehh's going after the Girdle alone."

Singer nodded without interest.

"That all you have to say?"

His son yawned. "Yes."

Garick dug his heels into the horse's flanks and rode hack up the line, furious and frustrated that he could not get through to Singer. *Stubborn like Jude*. Sometimes Garick wanted someone to talk to; now was such a time, but Jenna never had anything to say about Singer, and the girl from Karli, warm as she was, had no thought but Arin. Garick started to regret not calling his younger son home, after all. He wondered where he was.

CALLAN SQUATTED BY THE DEAD HORSE. "Run to death," he judged. "Less than an hour ago. Still warm."

They were within half a mile of the river with the Mikan settlement of Filsherg on the other side, a street of cabins, a trading post of sorts and the main harracks of the northern division. For Bowdeen it would be coming home. Sidele was up this way by now, working her circuit, fortune-telling and doing tricks. She always did good in Filsherg with the harracks there and the crih girls wanting to be told how they were going to meet a stranger with a lot of goodness in him, live to be a hundred and die rich.

He thought more and more of Sidele now as an antidote to the mean reality of the drag. His tired mind weighed the possibility. If he could only get the hell away from Callan, then hire a boat...

Might as well, the moneymeat was gone. They'd made a hundle today—more than half the pathetic remnant of coveners, five of them his own score. Not much to it now; the Karli were too tired, too hungry, too plain run out to give much of a fight. So few of them: it strengthened his growing belief that they weren't the main Karli force, but a diversion. If that was so, somebody somewhere was gonna be hit awful hard and fast. He wasn't about to tell Callan, he was already getting harder and harder to keep in line. Anyway, if the Karli'd screwed him, he'd been kissed a lot, too. Fifty krets in his pocket, enough not to mind losing ten-kret Arin. That bothered Callan a damn sight more than it did him.

"This was his horse," the suh declared. "He was here."

"How you know?"

"I know."

Bowdeen studied the ground. The Shando master was an obsession with Callan. He was gone, and the other was acting like a hungry weasel without any chickens to steal.

"I'm sure it's him, Commander. I want him"

Bowdeen shook his head in disgust. "All right. I can get him."

"Where? They split up."

"I can get him. Course, we'll have to chase now, just the two of us. Can't wait for the company."

"All right." Callan rose, impatient to move.

"That means we gonna be missing for a while, suh. That don't sad me none; way I see it, we've been out of a job all year."

"Yes," Callan nodded. "Just the two of us."

"Lead'll head the rest back to Lori, all the companies. No more money to make anyway."

"My orders will cover it," said Callan.

Bowdeen gave him an unflattering appraisal. "Like to see them orders someday, suh. Like to know who gives you orders

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outside me."

Callan did not reply.

"And the price goes up, sub. To get myself missing is worth more than ten krets."

"Fifteen if you find him." Callan said. "Twenty if you bring him down."

Bowdeen didn't move. "Ten now."

"All right, ten now, but let's move," Callan fussed with his saddle. "We don't even know where to start."

"Sure do," the Wengen pointed to the ground at his feet. "There and there and there."

Now Callan saw the line of spots dried to the color of dark brown rust on the pale green grass. Their direction led off toward the river.

"He's leaking blood," Bowdeen judged. "Maybe not bad, but he's too beat to be thinking good. Fooled me last winter, fooled us all along." He dusted his palms and rose. "That mofa's on the river right now, and I know where we can get a boat."

Callan's protruding stare widened. "To Filsberg?"

"That's where." Funny how it worked out so nice.

"He wouldn't do that."

"No, he wouldn't," Bowdeen agreed. He felt tired and too old and more than a little sad. "He's been running, though, and fighting and out-guessing too long. He was due to one mistake."

"But not into Mrika, not with the barracks and the headquarters of the whole northern division!"

"That's his mistake, sub: guessing I'd never think of it."

Bowdeen slipped the reins over the horse's head. He sighed, mightily sick of Callan. They didn't come harder or tougher or braver than the sub. More than just his ass was iron, and if he himself didn't take old Trace's field-command, it would go to Callan who knew as much as anyone about deepwoods fighting now. But Callan didn't know or care anything about people. You have to know men to lead them.

And—Bowdeen had to admit it—he was gut-sick of himself, too, because, except conscience didn't no way fill a belly, a Wengen ought to run with Arin now, not chase after to cut him down. Bowdeen faced Callan again and struck out his hand. "He got tired, sub. Happens to everybody sometime. Deal me ten."

The flatbottom skiff, his only inheritance from his father, had withstood long years of use. It never leaked; every cranny and crack was well-caulked with a mixture of resinous gum and tar.

Webb pushed it into deep water with the willow pole, a gift from Doon, the only one who'd come to see him off. Strong and light, it was notched at one end to be fitted with his fish net. Other gifts of meat and cooked rice were stowed forward with his bow and quiver.

Webb waved to Doon, the Suffec leader, and the old man nodded with calm melancholy. In a curious way, Webb felt that though Doon didn't approve of Garick's mission, he thought more of Webb for going.

As he poled off the bank, Doon's lip whispered in his mind. Yes.

You said dumb.

Going's dumb. Reason's not.

Webb wasn't sure about the reason. It was too big.

Doon nodded gravely from the shore. *Find it, then.*

The skiff floated further from the shore. Webb... Doon

once more, one last word.

?

Luck.

Webb grinned and waved again, then turned his face forward so Doon couldn't see the smile fade. Luck was what he'd need, luck to get in and remember where the island was, luck that it actually held the thing Garick wanted, luck that he could get out without ending up lost or hit or bear-ate.

The boatman, thin, stone-hard, moved about the wet rocks of the shoreline as if each step had been long practiced. He ceased moving, dropped the nets in the stern of his boat and stood quite still when the tall man broke out of the bush and stumbled toward his boat. The wind was right—or wrong; the boatman could smell his filthy skins. He thought at first it was a Wengen, but closer he perceived the long-blended layers of dirt, coven paint and sunburn. The skins were literally rotting off him. Through a rent in the remains of trousers, he could see a leaf-wrapping around the thin leg, brown with dried blood. The man wobbled over the rocks and slumped down on the stern board of the beached boat. For a moment he seemed to forget the owner, head hanging forward, breathing weakly. "Old man—" The boatman caught the Shando drawl. "Take me across."

"Well, now," he hedged. "You got any money?"

He had to repeat the question; the Shando had forgotten him again, so spent that only well apparently prevented his falling over. The head wagged vaguely. "No."

"Well, I got to eat, and the fish ain't running like last week, so..."

The tall man stood up with an effort, towering over the Mrikan, his emaciation adding to his height, the matted hair hanging over eyes that were winter-cold but distant rather than cruel. He was filthy, but the knife in his scabby claw was spotless and fresh-honed.

"Old man," he repeated dully. "I want to... go across."

The boatman looked at the knife. "Sure, I'll take you. But I ought to get something. That's only fair. Good Shando bow and quiver there. Some merk might give a half-kret for that. Maybe more for knowing where I got them. But I'm a fair man."

The Shando looked through him past him. Distantly: "Oh yes, that's only fair." The bow and empty quiver were unsung and handed to him. "Look at me, old man."

"Huh?" But the eyes held his. The boatman could not look away.

"Your life and mine are... irrelevant, old man. Isn't it strange that we both want to live so much?"

The man's bearded lips moved, but the voice seemed to come from inside the boatman's head. He felt queer; as if he were not alone inside his private thoughts. But that was foolish. It was important to shove the boat out away from the shallows and cross swiftly, and if there had been any idea of selling anything to the merks, he forgot it.

Ego irrelevant. What he wanted didn't really matter, except to him. And what still mattered? He leaned back in the prow of the boat and tried to remember a time before Lishin, before Holder. He couldn't hold on to anything. There was Shalane, but even she was hazy. He pressed his eyes tight-shut and tried to make her face stand out clear in his mind.

The woman-figure came into focus so suddenly, so vividly she might have been real. Not Shalane. He opened his eyes

and the vision was gone. He closed them again and tried to bring her back, but failed.

Arin looked at the boatman, but the old man rowed mechanically, his back to the Shando. It didn't leak from him; his simple mind was easy to control. He could have killed him and taken the boat, but he was too weak to pull against the slowest tide. And one more death was as pointless as one more life.

The woman-figure didn't resemble anyone he'd ever known or met. Though his mind only held her for an instant, it retained every detail sharply: the short nose; wide-set black eyes; dark hair hanging down her back; broad mouth with teeth nervously chewing at the back corner of her lower lip. Thin, even bony, her body had a stark femininity in spite of, or perhaps because of, its angularity. Around her shoulders she clutched a faded shawl.

Who was she? Why did she invade his mind in Shalane's place?

On the bank from which they'd cast off, two men stood close together, too far away to see clearly, except one was black. The black man raised his hand and pointed toward their boat.

Bowdeen and Callan. Hiding in the underbrush was sure death. Bowdeen and Callan would find him fast, or the merks would. Town was his only chance, and it was a slim one. But there at least he might be able to hide behind a door or in a loft. Might steal something to eat, an hour's rest. Pitiful hope, but all he had left.

Strangely, Arin thought, the closer the danger came, the more important it seemed that he might not be breathing by nightfall. The strange woman's face appeared again in his mind. He willed it away, and then it was Shalane as he last saw her, clearer than he'd remembered in countless weeks. Sharp and dear and—

Bowdeen and Callan were rowing now. He had to get ashore at the closest point and take a chance on getting lost before they landed. They were pulling straight for him. The old man with his back to Arin swerved the boat directly for the nearest shore, as if it had been his own idea.

Sidele stared at the crystal with feverish intensity, willing the sudden vision to appear again, but it wouldn't.

This was real! This was success! Heart hammering, she recalled the strange features seen in the glass: narrow, bearded face, wild auburn hair, eyes sad beyond sad. She wondered who he was. Not that it mattered: the crystal could bring anyone, anything first time. The trick was making it work again on purpose.

She used to regard it as a piece of junk to impress the customers, like the sign she hung outside with peculiar, meaningless red symbols on it. Oh sure, old Pelly with the yellow hair and had teeth taught her the power might not come for years and years, but Sidele doubted the talent of a reader who needed half a jug before she could see pictures in a saucer full of ink.

Yet maybe there was truth in it. Maybe hers was a real talent. Her readings were almost always strengthened by a lucky hunch or, sometimes, a random jolt of lep, but this was so different, much more important because—

The approaching footsteps broke her train of thought. Coming fast. She cursed, hoping for once it wasn't a customer. She wanted to work more with this thing, keep trying. But like the old man said, they both needed the

money. Hell, if she was beginning to get it, really get the power, she could double her prices, but... the customer.

Sighing, Sidele rose and grabbed her shawl. It was muggy, felt like storm, too hot for the wrap, but customers expected her to look the part. She got her thoughts running on the right track, trying to pick up first impressions. The hurrying footsteps were coming right at the door.

It burst open with a force that strained the hinges. A giant man stumbled through it, slammed it shut behind him. He lurched against the table, head down, totally spent. Sidele saw the fresh blood on the filthy, torn deerskin trousers.

In spite of the shawl about her shoulders, Sidele felt a slight chill. Maybe it was the tangled mop of auburn hair that warned her she'd recognize the stranger's features when he raised his head. She would know the cut of the mouth, the eyes... yes. The face in the crystal, astonished as her own.

"You..." he croaked. "It's you. It is you."

Her mouth hung open. "What?"

He said it in a low, awed voice. "Who are you?"

"Sidele."

"Sidele..." It seemed an effort for him even to think the syllables. He reached out to her, wavering on his feet. "Help me." me."

His fingers touched her hand. Then his knees buckled. Arin crumpled to the floor.

Their boat crunched on sand and rock. Callan jumped ashore. "Which way? Town, you think?"

"I guess," Bowdeen clambered out with less nimbleness. He was bone-tired, but keeping it from the sub. "More places to hide." Bowdeen pointed to the last straggle of squat houses that marked the outskirts of Filsherg. "He's hurt, too. I guess he'd try for one of these. Too many merks further in."

Callan loped off briskly toward the nearest house. Bowdeen fell in beside him, wishing they could walk easier, but not wanting Callan to find the money-meat first. The day was still hot, but a sudden gust of cool wind swept across the short grass. Bowdeen studied the northeast sky.

"Storm before night. Coming fast."

Callan nodded shortly. "Then let's get him quick."

They strode off again in silence. After a few minutes, they came up on the rear of the closest shack, a low, wind-blistered structure of raw pine plank. Bowdeen halted.

"Two doors. You watch the back, I'll go round and—"

"I want the front," said Callan.

"No. You ain't gonna cheat old dad out of five krets."

Callan sighed. "All right, you go in. But I want to see."

"You will, sub," Bowdeen grinned. "If that Shando's inside, you gonna get the loudest 'Y'all come' you ever heard."

Sheddy drawn, he stepped carefully through the high weeds near the house, doing his best to walk quietly. Callan watched him turn the corner and disappear.

Arin or no, Bowdeen almost whooped with delight at the sight of the red sign nailed over the door. Sidele. Sidele! *Damn if I ain't lucked!*

He checked an impulse to sheathe his sword and rush inside. The door was closed; maybe she had a customer.

Except...

Except it didn't feel right.

She often teased him for being more Circle than he remembered, and he always laughed it off, but she was right, Bowdeen had a lot more deepwoods instinct than he allowed for consciously. It whispered to him now and took the warmth out of the day.

"There was a time when we did a job, Callan, and you were one of the best. I never liked your ass, you never liked mine, but we were good. We were soldiers."

He willed his pulse to ease, forced his respiration down till he couldn't hear it himself. Then he crept close to the closed door and put his ear against it. Nothing, no sound. Bowdeen waited motionless, one minute, two, three. *You outwaited me once before, man.*

Four minutes. He couldn't stay there forever; if he didn't move soon, Callan would, and that was money gone.

He pulled back a step, hefted the sheddy and kicked the door in. Nothing happened. Cautiously, Bowdeen stuck his head in, looked around, then took two paces into the room. It was empty except for the scratched, unfinished table in the middle with Sidele's dumb old glass ball. It was a small room, probably only used for her readings. Bowdeen figured the rest of the house was where she lived and stored the stuff for her now-and-then public shows. Behind the table was a narrow doorway. As he crept toward it, he saw she'd hung it with the bead curtains he'd bought for her out of his first drag money. He still recalled vividly the fight he had with Sidele over those damn beads; she didn't no way want his present, because it was bought with money made off his own kind. *Long time, woman. Just took you longer to get used to it.*

Bowdeen shoved the sheddy point through the beads. Then he heard Sidele moan. With a yell, he forgot caution and rushed into the room, turning fast, the blade at guard. He stopped, feeling foolish but still balanced to spring. There was no one.

This room was bigger than the front, and Sidele had her stuff tossed all over. A cracked mirror hung from one wall, reflecting himself. Clothes, false hair, jars of color, boards with heads wagging yes and no, and a few old skulls with holes dug in for candles covered the bare-boarded room. Bowdeen took it all in, from the dirty clump of hair beneath the mirror to the rags piled high on top of her big old wooden trunk.

His eyes stopped at the trunk; the heap of cloth on top of it moved.

"All right, boy. Come on out of there."

Another groan. It came from beneath the rages. Bowdeen swept them away with his blade. It was Sidele: tied at the wrists and ankles, gagged, flat on her face on the trunk-top and bare as an apple.

"Damn, woman," he plucked out the gag. "What he do to you?"

She coughed and cleared her throat. "Old man, you are one sweet sight. Just get these ropes off me."

"I will, but where's he gone?"

"And pour me something wet—tea, sida, anything. Feel like I been breathing dirt since sunup."

Bowdeen cut her bonds, then went to call Callan, pausing to toss her the first clothes within reach. "Sidele, that body of yours is a joyful sight, but my sub don't approve of folks being natural."

Bowdeen sat on the trunk, one arm around Sidele while she sipped horsemint tea and told her story. Callan paced, not yet

at the bottom of that well of energy that marveled the weary Bowdeen. He stayed the length of the room from Sidele. The life-long habit of thought would not bend: she told the future and called up powers other than God. She was, therefore, to be lumped with coven and equally distained.

"Next I knew," Sidele continued, "he points that knife at me and says take off my clothes."

"Like he had time to play," Bowdeen mused.

Sidele made an eloquent gesture. "With a knife, who argues? I said he could do me till dinnertime, but put the knife away." She and Bowdeen lapsed into rapid Wengen and laughed about something. "Dunesk," she shook her head. "It's sad."

Callan paced agitatedly; time was wasting and Bowdeen, with his woman close by, seemed quite content to let it slip by. "And then?"

"Then he rams the greasy *shmota* in my mouth and hits me on the head. Next I know, I'm buried under these rags until you come." She gave Bowdeen a quick kiss. "And you are still the best-looking man in town."

"So he's still running," Callan said. "Why stop here at all. What did he want?"

"Use your eyes, sub. Plain as day what he did."

"Commander," Callan's patience was strained, "you're wasting time—as usual. If you know—"

"If I know, I don't gotta say. My feet are just about run off chasing that mofa, and I don't have one hell of a lot of good temper left, so if you want a favor, you ask nice."

Callan sighed and regarded the wall. "Sir," he clipped off the words carefully, "I respectfully request you tell me what you think Arin did." He glared at Sidele. "One of us should be looking."

"Well, booe, now ain't you polite when you really want something?"

Yessir, yessir, tell me true'

Kiss your ass and lick your shoe!"

Callan ignored the taunt. Bowdeen pointed across the room to the mirror. "All right, what do you see?"

"Mirror."

"On the floor."

"Pile of hair. So?"

"Put it together: hair, black knife, Sidele's clothes."

Callan shook his head. "He shaves, maybe cuts off some top hair. Why make her strip?"

"So he can look like what he ain't."

"Like a woman?"

"You got it," Bowdeen said. "Bet he's down on Crib Street right now getting his butt pinched by merks."

Sidele giggled. "He didn't look like that kind of girl." Another exchange in Wengen. Bowdeen roared, hugging her.

Callan glowered. "Commander, are you just going to sit here with that—"

"Watch—your—mouth, Callan."

"—with that witch while that bastard Arin gets away?"

Bowdeen rose, stretched lazily and collapsed again on Sidele's rumpled bed, parting it in invitation to her. She slid down beside him. "As a matter of fact, that is just what I'm thinking." He sighed deeply. "I'm tired, sub, I'm done in, and I'm wondering now if I give a damn about finding him. Or why you do."

"He's a murderer."

"So what are we, chicken-farmers?"

"He murdered Micah."

"Who?"

"One—one of my people."

"Your people, huh?" Bowdeen considered it with half-lidded eyes. "And just who are they, sub? It comes to me, I never did know you any better than I know City."

Sidele said it: "I think he might be Kriss."

"Nobody asked you," Callan shot at her.

"Oh, now, hold on!" Bowdeen sat up, remembering. "This Micah—Arin did him?"

Callan's expression was peculiar. "Not quite, Bowdeen. He let you do it."

"The Kriss on the bald top."

"Yes."

"The Kriss were not to be bunted." Bowdeen looked up at the young man with new understanding. The edge of laughter went out of his voice. "And I made you pay me for it."

"Yes." Callan moved to the head curtains. "That's all right, that can pass. But I want Arin. Are you coming or not?"

It was a long moment before Bowdeen answered, staring at him with that mixture of comprehension and pity. "Not," he said finally.

"You're passing up twenty-five krets?"

"I came here for that. But I don't know, Callan. I just don't know. Saw myself in that mirror just now. And you. Man, look at us. We ain't fit to sleep in the garbage. Leather so worn, it gonna fall off us if it don't rot off. Coven knives, coven moccasins. You never wore a beard—you ain't shaved in a week. That rope you tie your pants with, that belonged to a master once. There was a time when we did a job, Callan, and you were one of the best. I never liked your ass, you never liked mine, but we were good. We were soldiers."

"I was something before that," Callan said quietly. "I was a man with a dream. That hasn't changed. Are you coming?"

Bowdeen swung wearily off the bed to face him. "Oh, man, forget him. He's too fast, too smart, and not worth it. You don't get him, someone else will, today, tomorrow, who cares? He coulda hurt Sidele bad, but he didn't, and I'm so damn glad—sub, when things work out right, a man ought to be smart enough to know it." He lowered his voice, almost gentle. "You want that field command, take it, sit easy and wait till City writes contracts again."

Callan tried to understand. "You don't want the money?"

"Oh, man, you are thick!" The Wengen slapped his thigh in disgust and exasperation. "Ain't you had enough? You see that meat we took today? You get a good look at those poor sad—?" He broke off and looked helplessly at Sidele who watched impassively from the bed. "All I know is, my last drag has been. I don't give a shit about Arin."

"Of course, it won't be too hard for Callan to find him," Sidele put in. "That mofo must be six-five at least. And in my clothes..."

The incoherent knot of disgust dissolved in Bowdeen's laughter. "Sure," he grinned. "That do make it easy."

Callan strode through the front room and yanked the door open. "I'll find him."

"Long as you catch him in Filsberg, I keep the ten and five more." Bowdeen followed, leaning against the doorjamb. "You get caught out in the rain, come on back and sleep dry if you want."

Bowdeen was too tired for anything but a bath and food. He cleaned his plate three times, then sat massively like a contented boar while Sidele bathed him with water from the rain barrel. Later, she lit a candle and they lay close together on the bed, talking softly. His head began to loll onto her shoulder, his eyes closed. Instinctively, one hand closed over her breast. He slept. The hours passed, and they did not change position though the candle guttered out. Beside the sleeping man, Sidele stared into the darkness.

The rain hushed to a whisper, lightning flashed less often and further away, though each distant ominous roll of thunder made the crystal ball rattle in its mount.

Long after midnight, the door banged open. Bowdeen woke and snaked from the bed, shedy in his hand.

"That you, sub?"

"Ask the witch," Callan grunted. "Can't she see in the dark?"

Sidele rose with a philosophic sigh and lit the remaining candles. The merik tramped into the rear room, soaked and bedraggled. He stripped off the wet poncho and his leather jacket and dropped them on the floor in a sodden heap. Sidele handed him an old piece of cloth for toweling; he took it without acknowledgement or thanks.

"Well," Bowdeen asked, "you find Arin?"

"Do I look as if I did?"

Bowdeen was amused and surprised. Callan was always a sour spirit, but sarcasm was unusual for him.

"The way you look, sub, someone did a bad job of drowning you. Anything to tell me?"

Callan was reluctant to discuss his search, but Bowdeen pried it out of him by degrees. When he heard Callan had been unable to hire any meriks to help in the search, the commander's brows contracted—only to open in surprised recognition when Callan described the little civilian sitting with the meriks in the bar.

"No hair at all? Big eyes, looks like he shouldn't go out without his momma?"

"Yes. You know him?"

"Maybe. Sounds like Spitt. You'd know him too, you went out drinking in Lori."

"I remember him," Sidele poured tea into three cups. "Pleasant little dummy, harmless as milk. Sells sida for Garick. Told his fortune once."

Callan took the cup, again failing to thank Sidele. "Spitt," he mused. "Why's he his far north? Garick already promised this year's crop to the money-men."

"Well, now, now," Bowdeen mused, sipping his tea. "Few months back, wasn't no end to them northern boys trying to find you and me. Now you hold out five krets, they just sit there. I hate to say it, but I think Garick bought himself some meriks."

"He'd have to buy the whole division to make it worth while. Garick's in debt up to his ears. He hasn't got that kind of money."

"Maybe not," Bowdeen conceded, warming his hands around the cup, "but it sure looks to me like somebody has..."

THE STREETS OF SALVATION lay silent in moonlight. Following Jenna, Shalane dodged from shadow to shadow along Salvation square. She grudgingly admired the tireless, loping energy of the Shando goddess. It helped to think of that rather than what she must do.

Disloyal to Arin, maybe, but Shalane couldn't feel close to his parents. Garick was kind but distant. Jenna talked little and shared less, and she did not even seem close to her husband. They slept in separate rooms in Chparzen, and on the ride to Salvation, Jenna went out on the hill with others regularly. And yet, Jenna's eyes sometimes followed the reclusive, preoccupied god. One look from him—Shalane read that much in the goddess—and the others could sleep alone. Yet Jenna and Garick did not touch. The why of it was beyond Shalane.

Still, she was glad to be under Jenna's wing. Maybe the two of them *had* done something to help Arin, he seemed safe now. Shalane wasn't exactly sure where he was, but she read him out of danger.

Staying close behind her, Shalane wondered afresh at the woman's ability to walk on timber without making a sound. Slipping ahead, the nocked bow in one hand, she might be a leaf blowing across the last of the summer moonlight.

All around them, other black-clad, soot-faced wraiths flitted in and out of the angular shadows of Salvation, each with an assigned sector. Shalane never met Garick's informant, but he was thorough down to every single house with its floor plan, as well as the change of the mine shifts and how many would be sleeping when they came.

And suddenly, in the pale light, it was time. They came to the corner of the first house in their sector. At Jenna's leap, Shalane melted back into shadow. *Wait.*

The door would lead directly into a kitchen; it would be secured with a simple fall latch that could be raised with the thin strip of iron supplied each covenor for the purpose. Shalane reached for hers. Suddenly a lamp glowed in the kitchen. Men's voices. *Two.* A chill clutched at her stomach.

More shadows darted on all sides, flowing onto porches, kneeling to poke at locks. She wanted dearly to run away and not be a part of it, no matter how necessary. Her hand shook holding the knife; she realized she had it in a useless overhand grip. Cursing her stupidity, she changed it. Her teeth chattered.

The door opened. Two men, stocky, powerful, appeared on the front porch, first of the morning shift. Others would be rising soon. The shift changed about two hours before sunup. Shalane knew, and the moon was low on the horizon. Stepping down from the porch a few feet from where Jenna and Shalane poised like part of the dark wall, the two walked easily, yawning, walking with hard steps, careless and heavy.

They stopped at a stone well. One of them worked the rope. Jenna stirred.

The arrow slammed him hard against the well wall. He buckled forward into it and the sound he made was like a pricked bladder. Jenna was already running toward them.

"Hey!"

The other shouted loud and sharp in the silence. Jenna caught his clubbed fist on her bow and, with her right hand, slashed up with the knife.

The house door opened. To Shalane's fear-heightened senses, the hinges seemed to scream.

"Moah? John?"

Shalane stopped thinking. A numb giddiness took her as

she whirled on the woman framed in the light. She cleared the steps in one bound. The woman saw her and tried to shut the heavy door. For a fraction of time, Shalane still thought she might turn and run, hiding where her knife would stay clean of this. Then her shoulder crashed against the door, hurting it in, carrying her past it in an unbroken thrust that knocked the woman over backwards under her, the knife hilt-deep in her stomach.

The Kriss woman was young and strong as herself. Face against face, Shalane saw the shock flood the other's eyes, but her left hand vised Shalane's own wrist. The blow was too low, nowhere near the heart. She couldn't withdraw. The strong hand locked hers immobile while the other tore at her throat and face.

"Whore! Dirty coven whore!"

She hissed the senseless foreign words again and again as Shalane felt the restraining hand weaken. She pulled the knife tortuously upward. Her hand was sticky with blood. The woman writhed under her, moaning. *This isn't me. I'm not doing this.* The Kriss woman was in agony, but there was no fear in her eyes, only hatred and a revulsion that frightened Shalane more than what she herself was doing. At last the hand loosed so she could pull free. With a sob of pity and loathing, Shalane used her entire strength, sliced upward through flesh until her knife sank into the tough muscle of the heart. Blood spurted and she felt the heart throb along the steel along her wrist, mingling with the beat of her own pulse. Sick, willing herself not to vomit, she held the knife in place until the heartbeat ebbed and finally stopped.

She floundered up on her knees, rasping for breath—and saw, there in the bedroom doorway, the two, frozen, wide-eyed little boys, staring at a black thing out of nightmares, all shiny wet down the front with the stained knife in her hand, and she knew at last what Arin tried to share, the Holder-thing that came between them sometimes and the thrust of him into her would have an arrow shape, and now her arms would hold him and the dead woman both together, see, over Arin's warm shoulder, the infant eyes with their mute witness more horrible than any accusation.

"Run away," she pleaded, tears running down her cheeks.

"Oh, runawayrunaway."

But they didn't understand, just stood and stared, and already she was wiping her eyes and incredibly her feet were carrying her toward them.

Garick slipped the latch to Uriah's door and entered. At his side, Jenna drifted like vengeful smoke. They found themselves in a short central hall. Uriah's house was constructed differently, connected to the church, larger than most others.

Automatically their feet tested floorboards, moving close to the walls to lessen the stress that might produce an audible creak. Their linked thoughts projected the memorized house plan: to the right the kitchen and girl's room. To the left, Uriah and his woman. The chief elder's door was slightly ajar. They listened in the darkness. Garick leaped. *Wait Here.*

Uriah is mine!

Not alone. Wait.

Garick slipped across to the other door, pushed slightly with one hand, ready to halt it with the other at the first sound. When it was far enough ajar, he eased through and saw the small mound, Uriah's young daughter in the bed. He drew the knotted cord from his belt and paused over the sleeping girl. *I'm glad it's dark and you're asleep.*

The lep from all his people leaked continually into his mind, the overload of anguish from four thousand separate hells as they did what they must, slipping back locks, entering bedrooms and leaving them graves. Covenanters whose minds had always nestled in the comforting All of Circle discovered in cold solitude that what they must do was neither pure nor selfless. Garick read the wordless thoughts, sharing as one hears music, but as in Arin's lep after Lishing, there was a new undertone, a bleak and mournful dissonance.

We were innocent before this.

A door creaked. The girl turned in her sleep.

"Mary, is that you?" Uriah's voice, had to be. *No, Jenna, wait!*

"Mary?" Deep, sharp and clear, used to command. Uriah surely. The girl stirred and woke. The cord would be too slow. Garick's band gagged the surprised mouth, forcing her down. It was quickly done.

"Who's that? Who's there?"

A flurry of thumping movement. Garick passed through the open door and down the hall. The portal to Uriah's room was wide open. Beyond it a blur of locked figures, black and white. The white struck out, connected. Jenna spun with the force of the blow, using it to gain momentum, dropping to her knees, bent arm snapping straight to sickle the charging figure.

Uriah stumbled, the power gone out of him. He gasped and doubled sideways against the bed and slid to the floor. Jenna moved to finish him, but Garick held her back. *No.*

A small wick burned blue in a dish on Uriah's work table. Garick lit two candles from it.

No lights!

"It doesn't matter now," Garick said aloud. Jenna's mind was closed to a narrow focus on what she must do, she wasn't hearing the myriad leps that bled into his own brain... *this house done... finished here... no more... finished the children.*

"There's no one left," said Garick.

The candle flame danced shadows on the figure of Miriam very still in the bed, her excruciating headaches gone forever. Jenna had barely disturbed the covers, though it was enough to wake Uriah.

He lay against the edge of the bed holding his side, glaring at Jenna like a downed bird of prey. He stared briefly at Miriam and with a deep, still horror, muttered, "Oh my God! Where were you?"

Garick bent down to look at him. *So this is my enemy.* A fine head, he thought, the intelligence of the expression delicately focused and tinged with a curious, mocking self-knowledge. Uriah regarded the master of Charzen and the disbelief in his eyes faded to comprehension.

"Well, Garick," he said, "I always knew you were creative. Mad, too."

Speaks Old Language clear as Judith,

"Your wife and the girl suffered no pain," Garick told him. "No one did."

"No one?"

"There is no more Salvation, Uriah. Your houses are still and all your fires are out. In a few years, the forest will cover you."

Uriah winced. Jenna's knife had sliced deep. "You think all my people are asleep?"

"No," Jenna answered. "Some are down in those mines. They're sealed in."

"You don't know where the mines are."

Marvin Kaye/Parke Godwin

"Jay does," she replied without expression. "Your Jacob remembered."

Uriah barely acknowledged her presence, his eyes fixed on Garick. They measured each other. Though Garick couldn't read the Kriss at all, he felt a wave of admiration for him. A time for kings, Garick said once. What a king Uriah would have made.

The Kriss sighed with dry resignation, growing weaker. "So Arin got away after all."

"Just barely," Garick nodded. "He remembers Lishin. And Elin and Kon."

"And the rats," Jenna added heavily.

"Let's not speak of horrors, Garick. You've not seen Matthew. This ends his hell at least. I find it hard to believe such as you totally human." Uriah regarded with detachment the stain spreading over his nightrobe. "Well, what's it to be? This unwashed cow with her knife?"

Jenna didn't move; she understood just enough of the foreign dialect to follow his drift. "You think Circle is animals. You think we like this. We think we'll never be clean again."

"I do sympathize." His mouth tightened in pain, but Uriah tortured it into a sardonic smile. "Garick, spare me this mumbly sentimentality. She seems to have done the job with her knife, but can't you spare me her tongue?" His breath labored. "That's odd. I'm thirsty."

"Jenna, bring him water."

"Finish him and let's go. We'll smell of this place too long already."

"He's finished. It won't be long. Bring the water."

She gestured her impatient assent; the door whispered shut after her.

"You stare at me," Uriah said, "as if you weren't quite sure what I am."

"I know what you are, Uriah. A waste."

"You surprise me."

"Waste," Garick repeated with slow despair. The feeling boiled in him inarticulate with its complexity. He was changing the world, had changed it and must go on changing and never looking back, and yet to kneel by the cause of so much of it begged words. "All the days we took to get here, I wanted to look at you, Uriah, talk to you. You—it's awful, but you—you make me real. We're both dreamers, dreaming alone and late at night, dreams so big and painful that anyone with a grain of sense'd know he was mad, but only the crickets and the wind say, 'Yes, probably. Get to bed, fool!' Uriah, you're the other side of me, the same ambition turned inside out. What we could have done together!"

Uriah was losing the fight to mask his pain. "Where is that bitch with the water?"

"There'll be something with it to make you sleep."

"The poison cup? How historical," Uriah swallowed with difficulty. "The two of us, Garick? No, we've always been apart. Opposed. The sanity and mandate of God's plan against the madness of thinking this repulsive world worth more than passing contempt. Garick, you think you've won, but you can't. Eternity is against you."

Jenna returned with a mug of water. "Some masters at the door. Say they're done."

Uriah lifted his head. "You incredible whore, you'd make hell dirty."

Garick stirred the powder into the mug. "She doesn't understand half of what you're saying. And it's not poison, just something to take away the hurt and let you sleep till life

"I'm not clean, I'll never be clean again. Please," she thrust herself toward him, helpless as a hurt child, "Help me please, please, please, hold me a little."

goes." He watched the liquid swirl, dissolving the drug. "Uriah, this eternity you talk about...the real world never sacrificed so much as a smile or a flower for it and never will. Here."

Uriah took the cup. "It was not a very pretty world, anyway." He drained it in one pull and thrust it out to Jenna. "Woman! Don't you know your place, leaving a man with an empty cup in his hand?"

Jenna stared down at him as if he were a perishing roach. "It's yours. Drop it."

"Bitch," he repeated with dry fervor. "No wonder Arin had it in him to be such a consummate bastard."

They lifted him onto the bed and settled Uriah next to Miriam. At his request, Garick closed her eyes. Uriah seemed completely relaxed and composed, even curious about the onset of the drug's effect.

"It doesn't hurt any more. The working starts in the fingers...and toes."

"Yes," said Garick.

"A tingle, a numbness...a thieving death. You've even stolen my suffering. I ought never...forgive you that." He tried to laugh; it emerged as an inaudible chuckle. "Out of curiosity...for the hell of it, you might say...where is...that delightful boy of yours?"

Garick shook his head. "I don't know; somewhere east. Making your son think he's my whole force."

Uriah nodded. "At great expense, one hopes." His breath grew shallower. Jenna left, sure he was gone. But before Garick turned to follow her, the piercing eyes fluttered open once more. The lips moved.

"What?" Garick asked, bending close to him.

"Jeremiah will bury you."

CALLAN STARED MOROSELY INTO the darkness, unable to sleep. Questions tormented him: did Garick buy out the whole northern division and if he did, where did the money come from? And how much cooperation would Trace and the other officers give a covener, even a rich one?

Bowdeen said he'd nose around for information come morning; the question niggled at the Wengen. It was growing into something much larger than he figured. Bowdeen was oddly troubled.

Now and then a lightning-flash still illuminated the room, and Callan saw the twin points of Sidele's pupils glint briefly. The witch who saw in the dark was awake and watching him.

He had believed the merks were in his pocket. A threat from such an unexpected quarter upset him, it made no sense, his mind rebelled against the possibility. God would not put such an obstacle in his path now when the end was so clearly in sight. All the long years in hiding, infiltrating the covens, winning place in the merks, spreading false rumors of City policy, carrying out the necessary tasks according to his father's plan—everything had gone smoothly. Now that they

were ready to break the covens for good and all, why should there suddenly be opposition within the very organization he'd worked so long to fashion as a tool for Uriah's purpose?

He knew that Holy tests of faith often came on the very eve of triumph. The soul was the prize; it was not for him to question God. Still, his tactical mind rejected the thought. Surely the long labors of Salvation on behalf of God's plan would not be so lightly valued as to be risked while the mettle of one soul was tested in some immortal crucible.

His mettle had been tested every day for years. There were the personal sacrifices, smaller but no less costly than Uriah's. He never let his father or mother see how ravenously he absorbed the feeling of Home in the brief hours he could spend there, how yearningly he looked after this or that woman as she moved with downcast eyes across his path, or the men with families they could come home to every day after simple, honest work. Like his father, he placed himself beyond this for the time, but the hunger came back. Once in a while, like tonight, he would weaken and drink, and the starvation rose in him...but that was away from purpose.

Always and first a soldier, a man of action, Callan racked his brain for some way to counter Garick's probable incursion into his mercenary resources. He had to know what the next few days might bring, but that was impossible.

Not impossible. There was a way.

Jeremiah immediately recognized the sinful nature of the temptation and tried to cast it from his mind. But the idea came back again, stronger...

Uriah had said—what was it? *Learn the kind of soldier He needs. What else? Buy, use, bend, plan, cheat—above all, learn and know the world. If some of us are defiled by it, the end will cleanse us.*

Learn and know the world. Use it.

Uriah was the leader; mustn't his injunction be Jeremiah's law? And if Callan misinterpreted out of zeal, wouldn't zealotry in God's cause be forgiven in the end?

He felt the presence of his father's spirit guiding him. It became clear that he must do this thing. There was even a certain amount of Scriptural precedent for it.

"Sidele," he called softly. "Get up."

"Why?"

"You must prophesy for me..."

They went into the front room. Sidele took her place behind the crystal and gestured for Callan to sit opposite. She put the skull-candle on the table, then stretched out her hand to him. He did not respond.

"Put your hand in mine."

Callan shook his head. "No."

"The spell will not work."

"No."

Sidele regarded him somberly. "All night, you have avoided touching me—even the most glancing contact. Is it my power you fear, Callan, or just that I'm a woman?"

"I want to know what will happen tomorrow, the day after..."

"It's hazy. Hard to see. Is there a part of City that's no longer City? Abandoned?"

Callan sat up straight. "Yes. Go on."

"I see a group of men, many. You are there. Giving orders."

"And?"

"They... lift something, I can't see what. More than one object. Passing them out to other men. Somebody—I think it's you—somebody is naming the things."

"What are they called?" Callan whispered, hotly curious as to how much she could really divine.

"Throwers," she tried. "Is that right?"

"Yes! Say more."

"I can't, it's too hazy."

"More!"

Sidele gestured helplessly. She clutched her head in her hands. "I can't see them clear enough; you'll have to help me. Describe those throwers, help me see what they look like."

Callan started to tell her, but then the long tradition of secrecy won out. He sat back. "I can't."

"Then there isn't anything else I can tell you."

"No, wait—" But she rose and blew out the candle. The room was grey with early morning light. In the back room, Bowdeen yawned and turned over.

"Don't tell him about this, woman."

She smiled sardonically. "Afraid he'd be annoyed to find his sub plotting his own battle strategies?"

Something like a canny smile creased Callan's thin mouth. Perhaps Sidele had helped him more than she knew. The idea might have been unshaped in his mind, but it was clear and hard now.

The throwers.

BY FIRST SUN the square was packed with coveners waiting to move out. Some had been there for hours standing in the open, avoiding the houses, the tombs, the doors of Salvation that would never open again.

Some of the masters slipped white tabards over their blackened clothes and set up a circle with the ritual salt, water and fire, and many lined up to purify their knives, far too many for the masters to handle. The smell of killing was real to these people, an actual scent compounded of blood and the accelerated secretions generated both by their own bodies and those they destroyed. It made them physically ill to endure it.

Jay drank from his canvas water bag, wondering that his thirst was stronger than his concern for his dead people. He settled himself back against the pilings. The head of his god intruded itself on his vision. Just as well. He'd meant to pray. Some kind of prayer.

Am I leaving You, my God? Is it possible to leave You? The love must have been there once, must have had a meaning, because I knew more of You in our stable, in Elin's arms, than in all the years at the altar. Was it that, the forgetting of love, that made this place a plague?

He raised his head at a flat jabber of Karli dialect. A group of them clustered about a young woman reeling with exhaustion, helping her with respectful hands. Jay guessed her for a master. The hide shirt was torn down the front, her throat and chest bruised and lacerated with claw-marks. She shook her head at a question, disengaged herself and slumped down on the pilings near him, head sunk on her

knees. Her body trembled pitifully.

"My folk over there want me to clean their knives, I should but I can't—" The aimless wandering voice pitched high suddenly, peaked and shattered in an agonized sob. "I'm not clean, I'll never be clean again. Please," she thrust herself toward him, helpless as a hurt child, "Help me please, please, please, hold me a little."

Jay put his arms around her. Her body shuddered against him, fingers strong as ten steel nails bruising his flesh.

"Just—"

"What," he murmured as to a child. "What is it?"

"The... the babies. No one wanted to do it, but they said we couldn't take them, and it's true, they'd die in the mountains. They'd make noise, can't hide like coven young. I mean, we had to, but they were so little and—" her voice went hoarse as she couldn't stop remembering "and so many of them. D-damfool Kriss women with their big, easy hips, why they got to have so many babies? So many babies... so many..."

He let her swallow some more water. She dabbed some at her swollen eyes, streaking the black paint.

"Know what you look like right now?"

"N-no, what?"

"A sad raccoon."

"I guess. Oh, here they come. They'll want me."

Four coveners, two men, a woman and a young boy stood waiting at a respectful distance for her to notice them. Still holding her, Jay felt her trembling body draw up, seem to pause in every shuddering muscle—and relax. Her ragged breathing lengthened into an even swell, her back straightened without stiffness. When she rose, it might have been from a refreshing sleep, and yet Jay knew the effort of will that enabled her to look personal agony into a corner of the well-disciplined instrument of her mind, where it could not twist thought or quail the muscles. This was why they were called masters; not because they held sway over others, but rather themselves.

One of the men came forward. "Shalane, the other masters, they so busy. You're Karli like us. Clean our knives?"

"I will," she granted. "Has to be done. Give them to me."

They hesitated. "Weren't sure," the woman began. "We didn't want... I mean, just you look so tired yourself."

Shalane started to reply, then, with the others, her head turned sharply. About the square, people began to rise—ten, fifty, a hundred, all Karli. Jay was used to the group response by now, disconcerting as it could be to a cowan. Someone lepped a command, and they all obeyed with the same deadly silence that blotted out Salvation.

"We ride now," Shalane said. "You find me with Garick tonight. We'll be clean together."

They withdrew with whispered thanks, taking her promise.

Shalane sagged back into her own fatigue, but the trembling was gone. "Karli got to ride out first. They're Garick's point. I'll ride a way with them. Make me feel better."

Jay got up. "Will you be able to do it tonight, help them?"

"Why?"

"It's important. I want to know. Are you that strong?"

"Strong?" There was no humor in her bare smile. "This ain't the end, you know that. This'll happen ten times over before we go home. That's why I'll draw the circle for them and clean their knives and say all the words, every single one of them, for every Karli who comes to me, and I'll share with

them—so maybe I can feel washed, too. Like when Arin came to me." The memory was frayed, but she let it live damaged in her mind. "No one gets clean alone. I have to do it."

"You will," Jay took her hand. "Maybe I'll see you across Blue."

"And Arin. He'll be there. He has to be."

"Tell him I said hey."

"You know Arin?" She brightened. "Where?"

"Just along the way. He told me about you. My name's Jay. Goodbye, master Shalane."

She moved close suddenly and kissed him on the mouth, not in friendly affection but a woman caressing a man and enjoying it. "You were good to hold me," she said. "Just, I haven't seen him in so long, and it's good to touch a man. You scared me at first. You didn't share."

"I—there's folk I miss, too."

"Your woman?"

"And others."

"You Wengen, Jay? You look like one."

"I live in Charzen now."

"Charzen? Good!" Shalane waved to a boy. "Janny, bring my horse. Now listen," she said to Jay with (it seemed to him) very married graciousness, "you come and see me and Arin in Charzen. We should be friends. You come now, hear?"

"I will," Jay promised. "I'll want friends."

She walked the horse to join the stream of Karli going east toward the river trail. Jay watched her lean far out of the saddle to take a bow and quiver from another rider and trot on.

Uriah should have known them better, should have lived with them. He never had a chance, not against that.

Jay turned suddenly to the god-sign and its carven agony. We should have known You better, too, remembered Your life more than Your death. Hell, that's not You! You're alive, and I didn't have to ask. You don't have favorites. You'll be with me and Shalane. You were with her when she pushed aside her own pain for someone else's. You're with Arin and lonely Garick, and Elin and even Uriah because You know that under the iron there was a man and a genius, too, who shouldn't be wasted. You'll bring him home like You brought me just now when I couldn't find You—

Jay realized he was grinning, then crying, laughing aloud with joy and discovery. Like Kon said, ain't it one hell of a grand day? Well, it is, it is, because I've finally seen Your face, You wonderful, wise, tough, unkillable man-spirit of a Maker—and damn if you didn't look like a raccoon. I always loved You, but now, my God, my God, I like You!

Moving through the crowd to find Garick, Jay passed young Janny and hugged the boy for the joyous fun of it.

SIDELE WOKE AT THE SLIGHT HEAVE of the mattress as Bowdeen rolled out of bed. "It's barely light; where are you going?"

"Going over to the barracks, gonna get some answers if there are any." Bowdeen rubbed the sleep from his eyes.

"There aren't any answers," Sidele murmured, "only questions."

He looked at her curiously. "You do talk strange sometimes." He slipped into his pants, then sat on the edge of the bed, pensive.

"Answers to what, Bow?"

On his pallet, Callan turned and sighed in his sleep. Bowdeen studied him before he spoke. "Sidele, this is big. I

ain't told you all, but we got fooled out there. In the bush, you don't know if it's two men or ten in front of you. First they all over the place, then running east fast as they can. We followed, we made money, sure, but I swear they made it too easy. Like we were supposed to follow. I just got a feeling there's a lot of 'em somewhere else."

The woman watched him intently. "Like where?"

"Been thinking about that. It adds up nice and even." He lowered his voice with another glance at the sub. "Callan's the money man, and Callan's the Kriss. The Kriss are west, we got fooled back east." He rose and bent over Sidele to kiss her. "Just gonna go and ask around, that's all."

Sidele sat up in bed. "Suppose Garick did buy them. What's that to you?"

The question seemed to trouble Bowdeen. "I don't know. Everything's changing. I just don't know, Siddey." He shrugged into his leather jacket. "Be back soon."

Someplace not far away, morning was ready to dawn, but beneath the thick overhanging trees, it was still deep night. Webb woke early on the small islet, hardly more than a high hummock of tangle and sand. He was still bone-weary and meant to sleep some more, but his stomach gnawed, so he rose, found some dried rice cake and munched unenthusiastically.

It was his last rest before raising the sand bank that marked the west limit of the swamp. It was over. The thing Garick wanted was in the bottom of the boat, just a thick, wide belt. On the front where it cinched there was a small metal box with a wiggly piece sticking out of it. He didn't touch it, Garick warned him to be careful of anything on the belt that looked like it wanted to be played with. He still couldn't figure how the god of the Shando knew it'd be there, in the middle of a deserted house in a swamp no one ever went in or out of. Besides the belt, he took a funny-looking cap with strange symbols on it; he didn't know, it might be important. There was a pouch too, made of some kind of clammy skin-thick stuff that also lasted out the ages. But the body in that small, airless room certainly didn't.

He looked again at the drab, unremarkable belt in the bottom of the boat. *Dumb*. Garick must be wrong. All the song-stories said it was bright gold and studded with gems. *This ain't worth piss.*

And the corpse. *Not Callee. He don't end.*

"What now?" Jenna asked wearily.

"We pick up the west end of our line," Garick said, "and hope we hear from Arin."

"And if we do?"

"He goes south."

Her lips tightened. "Hasn't he done enough for you?"

Garick shrugged, but could not answer her or change what he had to do.

The goddess stalked away to throw herself down against her saddle under a tree. She batted viciously at circling flies as if to pay them back for Arin.

"Goddess."

The Karli girl stood over her. Like most of the women in the column, she cropped her hair short now. Jenna thought her too immature at first, but the girl had steadied out since Salvation; perhaps Arin hadn't chosen so badly. But she was too open and trusting. The world would hurt her—and it wasn't Jenna's worry if it did.

"I feel him safe," Shalane said. She had that innocent

assurance, combined with youth, that can be strangely abrasive without meaning to be. "Don't know where... east... but I feel it."

"Sit down, girl." Shalane knelt in front of her. "You took a man last night."

"Yes, it—" Shalane pretended to fuss with her cord belt, the only insignia of rank she wore now. She went on with a quiet firmness. "We all do, don't we?"

"So we do. You love Arin?"

"I'm with him."

"Sure," Jenna sighed. "We're all with somebody. What you remember of him—he's not going to be like that if he comes back. I know Arin—"

"Oh, I don't mind," Shalane nodded quickly. "I know he'll take somebody, too, for now." She wouldn't grudge him any woman so long as it wasn't a Mrikan. They were all (she heard) dishonest and diseased, and some were even fat. That amazed Shalane. She had never been to Lori, nor ever sick. And she'd never seen a fat woman under seventy.

"That's not it," Jenna lay back against the saddle. "Just, things change. Somebody meets somebody. You get changed without wanting to." She thought for a moment she could leap or share the thing she was trying to communicate, but that wasn't what she wanted at all. It was a very private pain to look at your own ghost, that earnest young face. Her chest heaved with a brief, soft chuckle, and she gave it up. Jenna was silent then, her eyes closed.

Shalane waited in respect, wondering if the goddess meant to sleep. She had not cut the great mass of red hair, but simply tied it back with a strip and pin. It was long as a horse's tail. She'd spent her lifetime growing it, Jenna said, and wasn't about to cut it for a few merks.

Arin's mother was not beautiful. They had the same coloring and the same eyes, the features a little too sharp for easy good looks. But even with her dignity, Tilda didn't seem half the goddess that Jenna did, stretched out now like a great, lithe cat—

"Shit..."

It startled Shalane. She had been staring at the goddess with the unconscious rudeness of youth, but suddenly Jenna rolled over away from Shalane. Her shoulders went on heaving.

"Goddess?" It distressed Shalane. Jenna's mind was closed tight. "What is it? Can I—?"

"It's all right. Just, you looked like—"

"Goddess, you're crying."

"Be still."

"I'll go get—"

"You won't!" Jenna uncoiled from her misery and trapped Shalane's wrist in a hard grip. "You won't get, you won't tell. You hear me?" The tears glistened wetly under her eyes. "He's got enough to worry him." He voice tightened into a parody of a laugh. "And he thinks I'm strong."

The day was near high sun when Bowdeen returned to the house. Callan was out back with Sidele's wash tub. Finished bathing, he was now shaving himself with Bowdeen's razor. Bowdeen paused when he saw the sub. Had Callan been an observant man, he would have noticed an uncharacteristic hesitation in the Wengens' manner.

"He bought them all right, sub."

The razor barely paused. "You could always buy Mrikans."

"It's called being hungry. Try it sometime."

Marvin Kaye/Patrick Godwin

"Any sight of Arin?"

"No, that mof's gone. Forget him."

"How much a man?"

"Thirty krets, they said."

"Thirty!" Callan put down the razor. "Garick doesn't have that kind of money."

"He does now." Bowdeen squatted, pulled at a stalk of grass and gave it his concentration. "That's what I came to tell you. I found out where he got it."

Callan splashed off and rubbed vigorously with a ragged towel. "Well, commander?"

"Just Bowdeen, boy. I quit. I'm out of it." He began nipping the grass stalk into minute sections, took a deep breath and let it out.

"Well?"

"Spitt raised it. Sold off mine shares to the Wengen iron makers."

"Garick doesn't own any mines."

"Well..."

"What kind of—" Callan broke off suddenly. His expression changed as he stared at Bowdeen's averted face. "What kind of mines?"

"Coal." Bowdeen tore off another stalk and performed the same surgery. "Coal."

The color drained from Callan's face. His mouth opened, but the words wouldn't come. He sat down on the edge of the wooden tub. Bowdeen saw the flash of anguish before the man buried his face in his hands. His instinct was to touch him, touch his shoulder or something, but Callan wasn't a man you touched. You couldn't get close to him. And when he straightened up, his eyes were dry and bleak as ever.

Callan rose, handed the razor to Bowdeen. "I'm going to Lori. You coming?"

"No."

"You won't take that field's job?"

"No."

Callan shrugged into his shirt. "Then I will."

"And?"

"And break Garick. As he should be broken."

Bowdeen half turned away in disbelief. "Boy, you don't know when to quit. It ain't just Garick now, it ain't just dragging. It's Uhia—all of it!"

Callan reached for his jacket. "Break Garick, and there is no Uhia. Break Garick, and Hoban will stay quiet in Karli, the Wengens will run back north. Break Garick and we win."

"Win? Who? Who's we? And why? Why? You dumb son of a bitch? You ain't even gettin' paid!"

"I'll be paid." Callan buckled his shabby belt. "More than you think." He held out his hand. "Bowdeen—"

Surprised, Bowdeen went to take Callan's hand, but the Kriss completed his sentence.

"—you owe me ten krets."

Bowdeen winced. *Goddam! Thought he'd forget.*

He dug the currency from his pouch, counted off ten and started to hand it to Callan.

"Don't."

The two turned. Sidele was standing near the back door. "Give him five," she said. "He owes me for a reading."

Callan frowned. "Five? That's too much for that."

Sidele smiled coldly. "The rate goes up when I have to work at night."

Callan took the five krets from Bowdeen, said a curt goodbye and left. They watched him walk briskly off toward the center of Filsberg.

An ordinary man, a rational man, might have seen the defeat and given up. Callan was neither. He was devoted and single-minded, and he was Uriah's son.

Bowdeen puffed out his cheeks and blew. "Never thought the day would come I'd quit of that mofo."

"And you're not going to Lori?" she asked.

"Sidele," he shook his head. "This old merk has drug his last drag."

An ordinary man, a rational man, might have seen the defeat and given up. Callan was neither. He was devoted and single-minded, and he was Uriah's son. He couldn't out-bid Garick for the Filsberg division, but he could buy the more experienced Lori garrison at a price they would leap to accept. Two thousand men and every thrower he could put in operation. It would take the rest of his money, but it was the last turn of the game.

"So be's gone." Sidele spooned soup into a bowl and set it before Bowdeen. He ate absently; a lot of things had been troubling him. Now they were shaping to a head. Sidele sat down opposite and drew another bowl to her. "What are you going to do, Bow?"

She had to ask him twice. He was chuckling over his soup. "I hunted with Garick once. Wonder if he remembers me?"

"You thinking of finding out?"

"I just might, Sidele."

"Why?"

"It may be him that wins."

Sidele gave him a peculiar look. "He doesn't bave to remember that far back. The Karli know who you are. And the Shando."

"I guess." Bowdeen was bemused but not sour. "I been bought more times than a crib girl."

"You said we had enough money."

"It ain't the money, Sidele."

"Wha—at?"

"All right," he conceded with a grin. "I might hold out for a few krets."

"Garick wouldn't trust you."

"That old Shando don't trust, he buys."

He slurped thoughtfully at the bowl for some moments. Sidele studied his bent head with her distant expression. "So you'll be going off again?"

He nodded. "See you in Lori when I get back."

"If you get back."

"Hell, Sidele, don't I always? This old man's no fool. Garick gonna win, and—" He put down the spoon and finally said it. "And he's going to win." He thought of Callan. "But, goddam, it's gonna cost him."

Sidele rose. "You're really going to see Garick?"

"Just said, didn't I?"

She reached for his hand. "Come with me."

"Where?"

"In back."

"I ain't done eating."

"It can wait. I've got a present to give Garick. Might make

him happier to see you."

He followed her, wondering what was suddenly so important. She went to the big trunk box where he'd found her tied up. Sidele swept the pile of old cloth from the top onto the floor.

"Help me with the lid, it's heavy."

He grasped one end and she pulled at the other. They picked up the thick board slat and set it aside. The inside was filled with clothes and junk. Sidele scooped up a double armful and dropped everything on the floor.

Bowdeen looked down, expecting to see some kind of trinket. There, on the bottom, deep asleep, lay Arin.

He gaped at Sidele, unable to believe what he saw, what she'd done. Not that she'd fooled them both, him and Callan, but that she hadn't trusted him enough to tell the secret.

Maybe she knew what I'd do.

"You want to see Garick? Take him his son. Fair trade."

Bowdeen scratched his head. "Maybe. Or might be that Garick'll pay more for him alive than Callan would dead." He bent over the box and shook the sleeping pile of rags. "Hey, Shando, wake up."

Arin's eyelids quivered, blinked open. When he saw the black man, he started.

"Easy, boy, easy," the ex-commander soothed him.

"Nothing to fret. Haul ass out of that box. Sidele's got soup on, and old Bowdeen's gonna get you home safe..."

Shalane bounded long-legged down the hillside, darting among coveners in the halted column. "Yoh!" She hugged her nearest friend tight and was off again.

Goddess Jenna! Goddess Jenna!

?

I got him! He's safe! I know it's him. And he's coming home!

Jenna urged her horse up the column till she found Garick. He was accepting Spitt's latest report from a messenger who'd ridden fast from Filsberg.

—wouldn't have believed him, but there was Bowdeen standing in front of me asking for two horses. He's got Arin safe, trust him or not. It's worth whatever you want to give him. The boy looks kind of chewed but all right. They left to join you South. I never know exactly where you are, but Arin says he can follow by lep. Collon met me—"

"The girl says Arin's safe," Jenna interrupted.

Garick looked up from the letter. "Yes. Spitt saw him."

"Tell me what he says."

He read the whole report to Jenna:

—but nothing happened, only next time he might try to kill me, but I'm used to hiding when I have to. He went to Lori to become a field commander and buy the whole southern division. Forget trying to outbid him, you don't have the money or the time now. On the other hand, Collon doesn't have the money for a long war or the time to drag you piece-meal. You've got numbers on your side, maybe you

should find him and finish it. If you try to avoid Callan and go for City, you'll have two thousand trained men threatening your flank or between you and Chorzen, and if he takes Chorzen, he's got your money sure as you got his. Suggest you move in the open, let him know where you are. Let Callan come to you. He will."

The god and goddess looked at one another. "He made it," Jenna breathed. "He made it. My son, Garick. You said he'd never be a master: he is. He's gone everywhere, done everything you wanted and come out of it alive. They couldn't stop him, not my son. Let him sit on my left hand in the hall when we go home."

Garick nodded. "When we go home, Jenna." Then he shut his mind off from her. *And where is that?*

[To Be Concluded...]

[Continued from page 35]

Loss of Signal

designed to provide an umbilical from one ship to another. The array of jacks, receptors, contacts, and self-sealing lines was a complex engineering wonder. Lasser sliced into the sheathing with a cutter, and indiscriminately pulled at wiring until he had three lengths of fifteen meters each. As he worked, he took a sidelong glance at his chronometer: perhaps ten minutes remained. The most difficult part of his problem, after determining which wires had led to the camera's motor (he clipped these off), was attaching the spliced wires to the appropriate contact-strips at the end of the rail. He finished the job, after making great expenditures of electrical tape. When he had finished, he could bring the camera into the watchsphere.

Lasser sat in the couch and tapped up a display on the proximity warning. In small, closely-packed print, white on blue, the data appeared: time of original sighting, characteristics of object, its speed, trajectory and acceleration, and less significant information. As Lasser watched the read-out, holding the camera pointed so the screen was within its field of view, something nagged at him. It was undefined, but he thought it concerned the equations expressing the orbit of the enemy ship. Something about them...

The lens of the camera slowly bulged outward to focus on the screen. Lasser waited, then reluctantly released the camera and strapped himself into the couch. The *San Francisco's* engines came on almost instantly, boosting her rapidly out of her old orbit, away from Barnard's Star, and to safety.

NICKEL AND IRON IT WAS, and it had coursed undisturbed through the void for a billion years and more. But now, now its long, circular journey ended as it met the metallic object in its path and the kinetic energies of both were released in a fash of destruction that anyone may have seen from a half-million kilometers away, had anyone been watching.

Marvine Kaye/Parke Godwin

Lasser, surrounded by debutantes and an aura of smug self-satisfaction, sipped his champagne. His medal hung heavily—but not at all uncomfortably—on his dress uniform.

"You know," L'Heureaux was saying to him, "numbers are very interesting things. They can be combined in so many different ways."

"Oh?" Lasser was disinterested.

"Do you remember the confusion we had over that last meteoroid you logged in?" L'Heureaux asked.

"I don't—"

"The one that almost bit us dead-on. Surely you remember. You said it skipped off the shield. Your figures in the log said that."

"Yes," said Lasser, not understanding. "And you said the shield would probably have curved it into our wake."

"Yes. That's the one," said L'Heureaux, and paused, finger to lower lip. "And here's the interesting part," he said in a tone that was full of false wonder. "The difference between our two calculations, it turns out, can be expressed as a single digit in one of our equations. Such a small thing, but it would mean the difference between a rock heading into free space, and one striking a pursuing vessel dead-on. A small thing. But it couldn't have happened. It must have happened just the way you said it, Lasser—"

Lasser, as L'Heureaux spoke, had turned quite pale.

"—because why would it be said you were a hero, if the enemy you had 'saved' us from had been turned to scrap before it ever came within range?"

—G—

The Aleph:

Andrew A. Whyte



ADAMS, Richard

(F)

The Plague Dogs
Knopf/March/\$10.95

1st publication in UK (1977) by Allen Lane

ADLARD, Mark

Volteface

[TCity Trilogy: Book III]
Ace/March/\$1.50

1st publication in UK by Sidgwick & Jackson (1972)

Multifac

[TCity Trilogy: Book III]
Ace/April/\$1.75

1st publication in UK by Sidgwick & Jackson (1972)

In the concluding volumes of Adlard's dystopian trilogy, the Executives, mysteriously in power again after the revolution that terminated *Interface*, initiate a program intended to engage the attention and energies of the Citizens by reintroducing the concept of labor, although it is evident that both are redundant in the automated all-stalex metropolis. Much sport is had by all, especially the author. One reviewer claims that characters and situations are drawn from and serve as 'ironic contrast' to works by, respectively, Dante and Spenser.

AKERS, Alan Burt

Savage Scorpion

[Dray Present series #16]
[Valiant Cycle: Book II]
DAW/April/\$1.50

Many years before, the Savanti had summoned Dray Prescott to aid in their struggle against the Star Lords. Now, when his new life and family are being threatened by assassins, he seeks to relocate their hidden city, Aphrasno. (Heroic fantasy in the manner of Edgar Rice Burroughs.)

ANDERSON, Poul

Six-volume set:

World Without Stars

The Night Face

(Previously published as *The Spaceborn Beware!*)

The Peregrine

(Previously published as *Star Ways*)

The Long Way Home

Previously published as *No World of Their Own*.
Original magazine version.

Question and Answer

Previously published as *Planet of No Return*.

The Man Who Counts

Previously published as *War of the Wing-Men*.
Ace/February/\$1.50 each

Browsing in his favorite bookstore, a prospective of buyer may come upon what appears to be a bonanza: five books by Poul Anderson with unfamiliar titles. Closer examination will reveal that they have all been previously published, and if he were a reader back in the '50s, he has probably read them before. What makes this seeming disappointment an event of some interest is the fact that all these old Ace novels have been re-edited by the author, given his preferred titles and in some cases had their texts substantially restored (with splendid covers by Whelan as lagatappel).

ANDRHOY, Piers

Chaining the Lady

[Clutter Trilogy: Volume II]
Aven/March/\$1.75

In the first volume of this fine-wheeling extravaganza, the secret of instantaneous non-corporeal transport to other worlds through the transfer of Kirlian essence was offered to the Imperial Earth Council by the brags of another sector in return for assistance in combating an extra-galactic menace: energy-wielders from Andromeda. Plot of Out-world, a stone-age 'Jolly Green Giant,' with an intense Kirlian aura that made him the optimum sexual twofold, was chosen to serve as envoy to the other Spheres of our galaxy. Throughout, he was pursued by an Andromedan agent of equal Kirlian force, but female. The two took on a bewildering assortment of alien cultures and forms, and engaged in a variety of contacts hostile and/or sexual, ultimately making (fictitious) beautiful music together as Minkatan sapient and aspiring. As *Chaining the Lady* begins, a thousand years later, Andromeda has discovered the secret of involuntary hosting and has infiltrated the defenses of the Milky Way. Our new heroine is Melody of Minkata, a linear descendant of Flint and the 'Queen of Energy,' "with a mind as fiercely individual as her

amazing aura." She is also (an important credential for galaxy-savers) a reader of the tarot. This formerly arcane method of divination is apparently of some interest to Anthony, for he is now writing a "serious novel" called *God of Tarot* which he hopes will eclipse Macnastrop in the affections of the reading public. The third book in the Clutter Trilogy should follow in the fall.

ASPRIN, Robert

Another Fine Myth...

Illustrations by Kelly Freas.
Originally announced as "The Demon and I"
Starblaze/April/\$4.95

This second novel by the author of *Cold Cash War* is in a fantasy vein this time and comes to us from a new publisher (that of Kelly Freas's art book). [It's tough for a self-respecting thief to have to apprentice himself to a magician. It's worse when the boss lacks off, leaving you stuck with a short-circuited dimension-jumper. Add a slightly addled demon-hunter, a couple of inert imps, a thoroughly reluctant dragon and a belly dancer of similar nature—and life begins to be a trifle complex!] (Oh, and by the way, it seems that I erred in reporting Asprin's nickname among Creative Anachronists; it is not Yang the Terrible, it is Yang the Nauseating—or was. He has left the organization to devote himself to his twin careers.)

BAGLEY, Desmond

The Enemy

Doubleday/March/\$7.95
1st publication in UK by Collins in 1977.

If *Gislyth* is it, then so is this British espionage thriller involving genetic experimentation. There is a nice gimmick built around sinister electric toy rats.

BARBET, Pierre

The Joan-of-Arc Replay

Translated from the French by Stanley Hochman
DAW/April/\$1.50

In reality (somewhere in Paris), he is Claude Ayves, doctor en pharmacie. As 'Pierre Barbet,' he began to write in 1961. (He was born in 1925.) By now, DAW has published five of his nearly fifty novels, showing a marked preference for those with elements of historical speculation, set either in a parallel universe or, as is the case with the present work, where the history of Earth is recapitulated on

another world. [Most similar situations always result in identical conclusions? On a planet of Signs 32 two galactic historians attempt to resolve a debate. Their test case is one Linde de Noldar, whose resemblance to a certain Jeanne D'Arc has been remarked upon by the computer, since she seems to be about to lead her country's knights on a war of liberation. Must the warrior-maid been again? Another fine cover by Karel Thole.

HAXTER, John

The Hermes Fall

Simon & Schuster/April/\$7.95

[Hermes is an asteroid, last spotted in 1937, whose orbit brings it closer to Earth than any other astronomical object, even the Moon. On August 21, 1980, a meteorite expert learns that it is on collision course with the Western Hemisphere. The world has eighty-two hours to prepare for catastrophe.] Haxter has edited two anthologies of Australian sf and has written as of novel and several short stories, a book on sf film and co-authored *The Fire Passed By*, a non-fiction study of what may have been a similar occasion, the 1908 Tunguska Event, in Siberia (of that wasn't an alien spaceship crash).

BLISH, James [adapter]

(C+)

The Star Trek Reader IV

Dutton/March/\$9.95

Final volume in the collected Bantam adaptations of the original scripts. The last few stories were completed by Mrs. Blish, J.A. Lawrence (q.v.).

BLOODWORTH, Dennis

Crosstalk

Coward, McCann & George/Henry/March/\$8.95

Contemporary espionage thriller with sf elements (ESP, psychokinesis, dream theory, World War III, assorted speculative hardware) by well-known journalist expert on Chinese affairs.

BONE, J.F.

Conqueration Matador

Starbreeze/April/\$4.95

BONHAM, Frank

(J)

The Loud, Resounding Sea

Crowell/March
[Reissue/Japanese Novel]
For ages 11 and up.

BOULLE, Pierre

(C)

The Marvelous Palace and Other Stories

Translated from the French by Margaret Giovannelli
postponed from December. See *Galileo* 85.

BRUNNER, John

(verse)

Tomorrow May Be Even Worse:

An Alphabet of Science Fiction Cliches

Drawings by 'Aires' (Arthur Thomson).
Boskone Book #7 (For Boskone XV)
February/\$4.00 (paper)
Limited edition of 1000.

BUKILL, Robert L. [adapter]

The Miltipat Monster

Illustrated with photos from the film.
Celestial Arts/April/\$5.95 (paper)
Postponed from November. See *Galileo* 85.

BUTLER, Octavia E.

Survivor

Doubleday/March/\$6.95

Drew Whyte

CAIDIN, Martin

Aquarius Mission

Bantam/April/\$2.25

[In 1999 the Navy's most sophisticated submarine is investigating the disappearance of two nuclear subs deep in the Aleutian trench. What it discovers is a fantastic realm seven miles beneath the sea—an advanced civilization of humans who, instead of developing on land, kept their gills and became sea dwellers.] By the author of the books that spawned the *Six Million Dollar Man*.

CALDECOTT, Moyra

(F)

The Temple of the Sun

[The Sacred Stones Trilogy: Volume II]
Hill & Wang/April/\$8.95

CHAPMAN, Vera

(F)

The Green Knight

First in a trilogy.
Avon/February/\$1.50
1st published in UK by Rex Collings Ltd. (1978).

The King's Damsel

(F)

Second in a trilogy.
Avon/April/\$1.50
1st publication in UK by Rex Collings Ltd. (1978).

CHERRYH, C.J.

The Faded Sun: Kesrith

First in a trilogy.
[SF Book Club/March/\$1.98 +
DAW/August/\$1.95

Well of Shiluan

[Sequel to *Gate of Jewels*]
DAW/April/\$1.95

Recent Campbell Award winner C.J. Cherryh, a newcomer no longer, has retired from teaching (not without some regret) and is now devoting her full time to a writing career. Of her fourth novel, she writes, "Kesrith is currently home to two species: the regal and the mri. The regal, physically incapable of waging war, have long engaged the mri as mercenaries to settle their territorial conflicts. For more than forty years, the regal have employed the mri in a war on bismark and the mri have felt bound to honor their contract even when the regal have badly mismanaged the war. The novel begins on the day that the mri learn that the regal have sued for peace and ceded Kesrith to humanity. Only thirteen of their kind remain on the homeworld. The mri are suddenly confronted with extinction. The principal character is Nium, last of the lei, the warrior caste, one who has the misfortune to be the last-born son of all the mri and to be young while his world is old and dying. For him and the handful that remain, it becomes a question not just of ending, but of ending well—all that they are: the summation, if you will, of an entire species." The second novel in the trilogy, *The Faded Sun: Shon'ar*, has been completed and is awaiting publication.

Well of Shiluan is a direct continuation of the events of the novel with which C.J. Cherryh began her career in 1976, together making up two thirds of another trilogy, the final volume of which is now being written. We last encountered Morgaine as she and her reluctant beachman, Vanye, made their escape through the Gate of Jewel, closely pursued by Chya Reh. The world they have entered is doomed. Rising waters and shattering earthquakes caused by the approach of a great satellite threaten the annihilation of the peoples of Shiluan. Their only hope lies in flight through the Well, the last ghalee star-gate remaining open. But it is Morgaine's sworn mission to seal that way forever! Among those who also play a part is "a

young woman named Jhoran, who lives among the drowning tombs of ancient kings and longs for something brighter than the foreshores—the return of the ancient times—or some brighter issue of the prophecies that come on her and make her cursed among her own kind."

CHRISTOPHER, John

(J)

Empty World

Dutton/March/\$7.50
1st publication in UK by Hamish Hamilton (1977).
For ages 9-12.

CORHEN, Matt

The Colors of War

Meiwey/March/\$10.00

CORBEN, Richard

(GN)

Nowhere

Ariel Books (distributed by Ballantine)/February/
\$8.95 (paper)

DICKSON, Gordon E.

The Far Call

Dial (James Wade)/March/\$9.95
A Quantum Science Fiction Novel

Among of professionals there are a few who truly believe in Man's future in space and think that negative public opinion is due to misinformation rather than some kind of inherent genetic defect. Those people can be reached, they say, and concentrate various strategies to bring this about. One idea is to write a big best-seller, a book so structured that it can't miss, that has all the elements calculated to appeal to readers of Harold Robbins.

A great deal is expected of Gordy Dickson's new novel. With the proper kind of promotion, it could go over the top, it is believed. *The Far Call* was the first book to be selected by the Quantum judges, Ben Bova and Isaac Asimov. The original serial in *Analog*, on which this much longer book is based, is now five years old. The Viking program was two years ago. Still, with luck, the time could be right now. There are indications. "Something had to be done to save the space effort. It nearly went down the drain for twenty years. Then the governments woke up to the fact that there was energy and power and wealth to be had by going into space and the whole thing changed. For the first time in a while, we had a chance, and out of that came this Mars Expedition—the speaker's next step." ... The time is the 1990s. The speaker is Jens Wylie, US Undersecretary for the Development of Space, the central figure in a crowded canvas. *The Far Call* is about a six-man international expedition to the red planet. The crew of Phoenix I and II have been given too much to do and are under enormous pressure. Back home, it is politics as usual. The mission has been jeopardized by behind-the-scenes intrigues for power and profit, from international rivalries to private espionage and bureaucratic infighting. In the long view of history, it will be simultaneously both a disaster and triumph. Science fiction fans will read this book because they know how good Gordy is. But *The Far Call* is really aimed at the Best of the World Out There.

DIONNET, Jean-Pierre

(GN)

Conquering Armies

Art by G.A.L.
Translated from the French.
(Heavy Metal) 21st Century Communications &
Two Continents/April/\$4.95



DONALDSON, Stephen R.

The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever

[*Lord Foul's Bane, The Month War, & The Power That Preserves*]
Bantam del Rey/Harcourt & Winston/March/\$25.00

DRUILLET, Philippe

Lone Sloan: Delirius

Translated from the French.
(Distributed by A&W Publishers, Inc.)/March/\$8.95 (paper)
Two episodes.

EFFINGER, George Alec

Death in Florence

Doubleday/March/\$6.95

ELDRIDGE, Roger

The Shadow of the Gloom-World

Dutton/March/\$7.95
1st publication in UK (1977) by Gollancz.

ENRIGHT, D.J.

The Joker Shop

McKay/March/\$5.95
1st publication by Chanto & Windes in 1975.

FOSTER, Alan Dean

Splinter of the Mind's Eye

[From the Further Adventures of Luke Skywalker, Based on the Characters and Situations Created by George Lucas]
A Del Rey Book/February/\$7.95
Ballantine-del Rey/April/\$1.95
SF Book Club/May 1.98+

GASKELL, Jane

Atlan

[Atlan Saga: Book III]
St. Martin's Press/March/\$7.95

The City

[Atlan Saga: Book IV]
St. Martin's Press/April/\$8.95
1st US hardcover edition.

GAWRDN, Jean Mark

Algorithm

Berkley/April/\$1.75

84 GALILEO

GOULART, Ron

Calling Dr. Patchwork

[Odd Jobs, Inc. series]
DAW/March/\$1.50
Author's working title: "The Death Patrol"

GRANT, Charles L.

The Ravens of the Moon

Doubleday/April/\$6.95

HALBERSTAM, Michael J.

The Wanting of Levine

Lippincott/March/\$10.00

HANCOCK, Niel

Dragon Winter

Popular Library/March/\$1.95

HARRISON, Harry

The Men From P.I.G. and R.O.B.O.T.

Athenum/March/\$5.95
1st publication in UK (1976) by Faber & Faber.
For ages 10 and up.

"The Patrol: The warriors and policemen of space, the mighty men who stood between the civilized planets and the chaos of the galaxy...." Eleven thousand graduates considered the Special Assignments they might shortly be asked to undertake. There was the Porcine Interstellar Guard, for example, which certainly proved its effectiveness on distant Trowlen. Spot of trouble on that paranoid planet Slagter, but a single agent from the Robot Obtrusion Battalion: Omega Three took care of that (with the assistance of several mechanical associates). Year after year the cadets listened to these tales of the Patrol, and then went forth, "spreading law and order. Hand in hand, pig, robot and man marched solidly into the wonderful future." These two stories originally appeared in *ASF* in 1967 and '68. "The Men From P.I.G." was published on its own as an Avon Canset book (with the original illustrations by John Schoenherr) in 1968.

HENDRICH, Paula

The Girl Who Slipped Through Time

Lothrop, Lee & Shepard/March/\$5.95
For ages 10 and up

HENKEMEYER, M. Thomas

The Creator

[First in a trilogy]
Pinnacle/February/\$1.95

HOGAN, James P.

The Genesis Machine

del Rey/April/\$7.95
Ballantine-del Rey/April/\$1.75

The *Genesis Machine* is a technological fairy tale with an outrageous premise made credible by the author's up-to-the-minute knowledge of contemporary physics. It is 2005. The proponent of a unified field theory has at last superseded Einstein with a six-dimensional continuum he calls "eine Sechstreueinskleinodinstereunkomplexes" and which the world knows as "K-Space." Theoretical physicist Brad Clifford has gone on from there to postulate an elaborate system of "hi-space" and "lo-space" which manages to account for such troublesome cosmic phenomena as quassas, black holes and Hawking-type singularities. The research establishment which employs Clifford thinks little of his theory, not being able to foresee its immediate military applications. It is not above attempting to verify his conclusions by means of experimentation, without bothering to keep him informed.

JONES, Diana Wynne

Drowned Ammet

Athenum/March/\$7.95
For ages 9 and up.
Relates to the author's *Cat and Owl* series.

KATZ, Jack

The First Kingdom

[Volumes I-VI]
Wallaby (Pocket Books)/March/\$3.95

KELLEN, David H.

The Last Magician

Nine Stories from *Wetrd Tales*
[The David H. Keller Memorial Library: Volume II]
P.D.A. Enterprises/March/\$5.00 (paper)

KING, Graham

Killtest

St. Martin's Press/April/\$7.95
1st publication in UK.

KNIGHT, Damon

The Best of Damon Knight

Taplinger/March/\$9.95
1st published in 1976 by Pocket Books. This is first hardcover edition.

KURLAND, Michael

The Princes of Earth

Thomas Nelson/April/\$6.95

deLARRABEIT, Michael

The Borribles

Macmillan/February/\$6.95
1st publication in UK by the Bodley Head (1976).
For ages 11 & up.

LAWRENCE, J.A. [adapter]

The Random Factor

[A Star Trek Novel]
Bantam/April/\$1.75

LEINSTER, Murray

The Best of Murry Leinster

Edited by John J. Pierce
Ballantine-del Rey/April/\$1.95

The Aleph

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Ulysses: Part One
 (Heavy Metal): 21st Century Communications &
 Two Continents/April/\$6.95 (in color)
- LORD, Jeffrey
City of the Living Dead
 [Richard Blade series #26]
 Pinnacle/March/\$1.50
- LUMLEY, Brian
The Clock of Dreams
 [Cithulba Mythos]
 Jove/April/\$1.75
 MacBETH, George (C)(V)
Buying a Heart
 Athenaeum/February/\$4.95 (paper)
 Postponed from October. See Gables #5.
- McINTYRE, Yonda N.
Dreamsnake
 Houghton, Mifflin/March/\$6.95
 SF Book Club/June/\$2.98+
- MacLEAN, Alistair
Goodbye California
 Doubleday/March/\$6.95
 1st publication in UK (1977) by Collins.
- MACE, Elisabeth (J)
Out There
 Greenslow/March/\$6.95
 1st publication in UK as *Rainbow Revisited*.
 For ages 12 and up.
- MACEDO, Sergio (GN)
Psychorock
 (Heavy Metal): 21st Century Communications &
 Two Continents/February/\$3.95
- MASTERTON, Graham
The Sphinx
 Pinnacle/January/\$1.95
- Plague
 Ace/April/\$1.95
 1st publication in UK (1977) by Star Books.
- MILES, Patricia (FX)(J)
The Gods in Winter
 Dutton/March/\$7.95
 For ages 9-12.
- MILLS, Robert E.
Star Quest
 Illustrated.
 Belmont Tower/April/\$1.75
- MOERIUS (Jean Giraud) (GN)
Arzach
 (Heavy Metal): 21st Century Communications &
 Two Continents/April/\$5.95
 In color.
- Is Man Good? (GC)
 (Heavy Metal): 21st Century Communications &
 Two Continents, April/\$5.95
 In color.
- MOORCOCK, Michael (C)
Dying for Tomorrow
 OAW/March/\$1.50
 1st published in UK (1976) as *Moorecock's Book of*
Maryn by Orbit (Futura).
- MOORE, Raylyn
What Happened to Emily Goode After
the Great Exhibition
 Illustrations by Kelly Feras
 Scarblaze/April/\$4.95 (paper)
- MORRIS, Janet E.
Wind from the Abyss
 [Silistra or Ester Trilogy: Book III]
 Bantam/March/\$1.95
- NADER, George
Chrome
 Putnam/April/\$9.95
- NICHOLS, Robert
Garh City
Book II of 'Daily Lives in Nghsi-Aitai'
 New Directions/March/\$3.95 (paper)
- NORMAN, John
Beans of Gor
 [Gor or Counter-Earth series #12]
 DAW/March/\$1.95
- NORTON, Andre (F)(J)
Quag Keep
 Margaret K. McElderry (distributed by Athenaeum)
 /March/\$7.95
 For ages 12 and up.
- The trouble with fantasy games like "Dungeons
 and Dragons" is that for some people they become
 more real than what they have to do to stay alive.
 I've often wondered whether such a game could
 actually be used to construct a story or if one could
 be constructed about the other. Perhaps such a
 thought occurred to Andre Norton for her new novel
 uses just such a device. (Seven strangers, each
 wearing a similar bracelet, each having half-
 nummers of hands to find and destroy an alien, evil
 power that is controlling their lives.) Miss Norton
 was the recipient of the Gandalf Award for her life's
 work as a Grand Master of Fantasy at last year's
 world sci convention.
- NORVIL, Manning
Whetted Bronze
 [Ofan the Half-God series #2]
 DAW/March/\$1.50
- PANATL, Charles
Links
 Houghton, Mifflin/April/\$8.95
- RAYMOND, Alex (GN)
Flash Gordon Escapes to Arboria
Flash Gordon Joins The Power Men
Flash Gordon Versus the Frozen
Terrors
 [Flash Gordon series Nos. 3, 4, & 5]
 Nova/Gia Press (distributed by Crown)/February/
 \$9.95 each (paper)
- REYNOLDS, Mach
The Best Ye Breed
 [North African (El Hassan) Trilogy: Book III]
 Ace/March/\$1.50
- ROBINETT, Stephen
The Man Responsible
 Ace/April/\$1.75
 Seed story published in *Analog* January, 1977.
- SCHOEMAN, Karel
Promised Land
 Translated from the Afrikaans by Marion
 Friedman
 Summit Books/February/\$7.95
- SIMAK, Clifford O.
Mastodonia
 del Rey Books/March/\$7.95
 SF Book Club/Spring/\$1.98+
 Ballantine-del Rey/August/\$1.75
- SIROTA, Michael (P)
Dannus II
The Prisoner of Reglathium
 [Dannus series #1]
 Masson/April/\$2.25
- STRUGATSKY, Arkady & Boris
Definitely Maybe
 Translated from the Russian by Antonina W. Bouis
 Introduction by Theodore Sturgeon.
 [Best of Soviet SF Series #5]
 Macmillan/April/\$7.95
- SWANN, Ingo
Star Fire
 Dell/March/\$1.95
 An Eleanor Friede Book.
- SWIGART, Rob
A.K.A.: A Cosmic Fable
 Houghton, Mifflin/March/\$8.95 (hardcover) &
 \$4.95 (paper)
- SYNGE, Ursula (C+)(F)(J)
Land of Heroes:
A Retelling of The Kalevala
 Margaret K. McElderry/March/\$6.95
 1st publication in UK (1977) by the Bodley Head as
Kalevala. Heroes: Tales From Finland.
 For ages 10 and up.
- VANCE, Steve
Planet of the Gwafis
 Leisure Books/April/\$1.50
- VERSCHUUR, Gerrit (C)
Cosmic Catastrophes
 Introduction by Ben Bova.
 Illustrations by Stephen R. Bantingland.
 Addison-Wesley/April/\$9.95 (hardcover),
 \$4.95 (paper)
- VIDAL, Gore
Kalki
 Random House/March/\$10.00
- WARD, Lynd (F)(GN)
God's Man:
A Novel in Woodcuts
 St. Martin's Press/April/\$14.95 (hardcover),
 \$5.95 (paper)
 Reissue.
- WILHELM, Kate (C)
Somerset Dreams and Other Fictions
 Harper & Row/April/\$8.95
- YARBRO, Chelsea Quinn
False Dawn
 Doubleday/April/\$6.95

ALDISS, Brian W. &
HARRISON, Harry [editors]
Decades: The 1940s
Decades: The 1950s
St. Martin's Press/April/\$6.95 each
1st published by Macmillan London Ltd. in 1975
and 1976.

ASIMOV, Isaac.
GREENBERG, Martin Harry &
OLANDER, Joseph D. [editors]
One Hundred Great Science Fiction
Short-Short Stories
Doubleday/March/\$8.95

BOYA, Ben [editor]
Analog Yearbook
Baronet/March/\$5.95

BOYER, Robert H. &
ZAHORSKI, Kenneth J. [editors]
Dark Imaginings:
A Collection of Gothic Fantasy
Delta/April/\$4.95

DURWOOD, Thomas [editor]
Ariel:
The Book of Fantasy (Volume III)
Ariel Books/April/\$6.95 (paper)

FRANKLIN, H. Bruce [editor]
Future Perfect:
American Science Fiction of the Nine-
teenth Century
Second edition (revised).
Oxford University Press/March/\$15.00 (hardcover)
\$4.95(paper)

GREENBERG, Martin Harry
see ASIMOV

HARRISON, Harry
see ALDISS

KNIGHT, Damon [editor]
Orbit Twenty
Harper & Row/March/\$8.95

LEWIS, Tony [editor]
The Best of Astounding
Baronet/March/\$3.95

McCAULEY, Kirby [editor. (not given)]
Rod Serling's Other Worlds
Introduction by Richard Matheson.

Bantam/March/\$1.75

OFFUTT, Andrew J. [editor] (F)
Swords Against Darkness: Volume III
Zebra/April/\$1.95

OLANDER, Joseph D.
see ASIMOV

SERLING, Rod
see McCAULEY

SILVERBERG, Robert [editor]
New Dimensions
Science Fiction, Number Eight
Harper & Row/April/\$9.95

ZAHORSKI, Kenneth J.
see BOYER

Drew Hythe

THE GALILEO PRIZE

Winners Announced!

The short story requires a greater concentration of talent and energy than any other form of fiction. This special story form is not only the foundation of Science Fiction, but a unique American contribution to literature (credited to Edgar Allan Poe and the tabloid publishers of the 1840s). The short-short story, under 3,000 words, is an even more difficult and demanding form calling for a special synthesis of theme, plot, characterization, and setting which, at its best, approaches poetry in concentrated impact.

GALILEO magazine encourages this art form through an annual prize for the best work received for publication during any one year. All works of fiction under 3,000 words received between January 1st and December 31st are considered for both publication in GALILEO and the annual prize, to be awarded in spring of the following year.

First Prize: \$300 Second Prize: \$200 Third Prize: \$100

We sent eight manuscripts to this year's judge, Poul Anderson. They had no identifying labels and Mr. Anderson on his own initiative (and showing extraordinary will-power) abstained from reading GALILEO for a year so he could approach the finalists without prejudice. He said it was not easy to choose, but after a great deal of deliberation he narrowed the field to the three winners:

First Place:	"Django" by Harlan Ellison
Second Place:	"Do Not Go Gentle" by Kevin O'Donnell, Jr.
Third Place:	"The Oak and the Ash" by John Alfred Taylor

The first place winner, "Django," by Harlan Ellison appeared in issue #6. "Do Not Go Gentle" by Kevin O'Donnell, Jr., which may be seen in this issue, received second prize. Our third place prize winner was "The Oak and the Ash," which appeared in issue #5, and was John Alfred Taylor's second professional sale. We, the staff of GALILEO, extend our sincere congratulations to all.

On to next year's competition!

All submissions must contain a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Each must be completely original and previously unpublished. Manuscripts should be sent to:

GALILEO, 339 Newbury Street, Boston, MA 02115

Reviews

Floyd Kemske



COSMIC ENCOUNTER
created by Future Pastimes
Eon Products, \$10.00

Reviewed by Floyd Kemske

I SUSPECT there is a community college in the midwest which offers a ten-week course on how to play *Cosmic Encounter*. If not, then somebody is missing a good bet. This game is not easy to learn and many of us could probably use professional help with it. I myself have played the game both drunk (at our office Christmas party) and sober (first thing in the morning with my teenaged nephews). I found it easier to play it sober but more fun to play it drunk. If my review seems prejudiced, it might be because I never won and am still smarting over the shacking I took from a sixteen-year-old.

Some might believe that the best games are easy to learn but hard to play. Certainly this is true of classics such as chess, poker, Chinese checkers, and even—to a certain extent—bridge. It is not true of *Cosmic Encounter*, which has so many rules that it requires playing several times for the players to understand them. Then, when everybody has learned the rules, you discover that these same rules must be periodically changed or broken for proper playing of the game. Does it sound complicated? It is.

The groups with which I have played have found it best to learn playing in a few discrete stages. First, take a turn or two around the board in which

everybody engages in simple attack and response operations. Then go around a few times allowing players to make alliances (a crucial feature for the game's effectiveness). Once everybody feels comfortable with attacks, compromises, alliances, and consignments to The Warp, then begin using your unique alien powers (which override the game rules). When things are proceeding smoothly again, start using edicts (which obviate alien powers or otherwise wreak havoc with well-planned strategy). You will probably find you must play the game through this way before you can play seriously, so don't offer any prizes to the winner on the first time around.

Once the game is underway in earnest, it gets interesting. It needs more luck than chess and more strategy than poker. And you might be surprised at how much you can know about what is going on—if you possess a superlative memory, an outstanding sense of strategy, and a liberal allowance of motivation. After all, there are only four colors involved and care in observation can help you calculate the odds on who will be attacked next. Of course, it usually happens that just when you think you know what will happen, some turkey stops the action with one of the half dozen edicts (you can invoke an edict—if you have the card—whether or not it is your turn). The result is an engrossing way of whiling away a rainy afternoon, or a whole semester if you're a sophomore and you're not careful.

The game's big problems are the complexity of the rules and the tediousness of getting the board set up.



Both call for a great deal of motivation. I am not sure what the manufacturers can do to overcome these things. A lot of people, however, will give up before learning how to play. And if you are the game instigator in your crowd, it is difficult to keep the other players in the room while you spread out the eighty tokens, shuffle the cards, and mix up the Destiny Chips. If you can get through these steps, however, you will find *Cosmic Encounter* well worth the effort.

—G—

TREY OF SWORDS
by Andre Norton
Grosset and Dunlap, \$10.00

Reviewed by Barry R. Bernard

THIS BOOK, the latest in the Witch World series of Andre Norton, captures, but never releases, the reader. The answers that are begged never come—so I suppose that we have to hope the next volume will provide. Of course, the publishers will be pleased to have a waiting public, but they deserve little after exorbitantly overcharging for a 180-page, large typeface edition. (If you want to avoid the cost, read the dust jacket, just about the whole story is there.) But if you don't mind being left hanging, and if you enjoy better-than-average fantasy, then by all means... borrow it.

Trey of Swords is, basically, three related short stories. The plots are ordinary, and the wording is sometimes general, but the quality of it comes from

a number of mysteries that keep the reader reading. The two central characters, Yonan, and Crytha, possess flirting spirits from another time. A young ineffectual warrior, Yonan is haunted by the memories of Tolar, a past great warrior; Crytha, on the other hand, is a mildly talented healer, who is frustrated by the vague presence of one of the Old Race's Great Ones. It is in these possessions I find the imagination that I like. The people of the past, it is suggested, if failing a mission can return in another person's body and take up the quest once again.

A clue to Yonan's fate comes as he finds, by chance, the hilt of a sword buried in rock. (Sound like Young Arthur?) Chiseling it free, he later carries it on a rescue mission of Crytha. Now Tolar begins to make his presence known as the secret of the sword, Ice Tongue, is revealed to him by Uruk, another great warrior from the past, whom Yonan also rescues. Uruk tells that Ice Tongue is one of the Four Great Weapons, and, as such, chooses its own master. Uruk himself is the master of another, an ax called Helm-biter. Having been resurrected from a tomb of ice by Yonan, Uruk now has the opportunity to learn that the glory of his world is gone, and that an old enemy, Targi, is responsible. As representatives of the Light, Uruk and Yonan (but now also Tolar) go into the past to defeat Targi of the Dark and thereby change history. In the meantime, Crytha, who was returned home, finds that her skills are summoned by the forces of the Dark. She struggles against Laidan, an ancient lover of Targi, and discovers the spirit of Nintra, one of the Great Ones.

I'm happy at this point for Crytha, because she understands that it will take some time to learn what has happened to her. As a reader, I wondered if I ever would. Not only that, I really did want to know what happened to Uruk and Yonan after their encounter with Targi. And it did seem strange that Yonan could muster up a little telekinesis when he had to. Was he of some Power as well?

I understand that a series intends to keep our interest, but *Trey of Swords* should, if not climaxing with the defeat of the forces of evil, at least resolve the positions of those characters it introduces. Anyway, I'm caught, I guess. I'll read the next one, too—if I get a free review copy, that is.

TIME STORM

by Gordon R. Dickson
St. Martin's, \$10.00

Reviewed by Floyd Kamsky

IF YOU would suppose the boundary of a temporal discontinuity to appear on Earth as a wall of gray mist, then your imagination works a lot like Gordon Dickson's. The "mistwall" is the most visible effect of the time storm which has minced the Earth, leaving each piece of the planet's surface functioning in a time independent of the others, even if the parts are still physically connected. This chaos is the setting for the adventures of a handful of the most memorable characters ever to inhabit a science fiction novel.

The action is conducted and narrated by a former child prodigy of the business world (successful enough to both make a million and snuff a heart attack before the age of thirty), Marc Despard. His closest companions are a shell-shocked and happily imprinted leopard (the most endearing fictional animal I've encountered since Mighty Joe Young) and a teenaged girl (taciturn to the point of aphonia) who loves the leopard. Despard's quest to first understand, then control, the time storm takes him across the virtually depopulated (and certainly fragmented) continent, building a small community of survivors in the process.

Ultimately, he and his band reach the far future to one of the continental segments and he is set on the path of a universe-spanning mission to subdue the forces of chaos. As Despard develops his ability to deal with the time storm (which doesn't seem to require much in the way of tools), he discovers this development is integral to the growth of his powers of self-realization. Ultimately, the reader is bedazzled with the realization that these parallel developments are two aspects of the same progression. And, in fact, the rest of the eight or nine characters have all had indispensable roles in the growth of Marc Despard.

Time Storm is a tour-de-force of sf characterization. On the other hand, it has a weakness. Science fiction readers will accept most anything as an explanation, provided it is consistent. But to explain galaxy-spanning temporal dislocations with the phrase "entropic anarchy" is to abandon cause

and effect. This poetic redundancy supposedly signifies the spontaneous and selective reversal of the expansion of the universe, purportedly the result of an overextension of the "space-time fabric." This is not cause and effect. It is wordage, reminiscent of Moliere's ironic explanation that opium puts people to sleep because of its "dormitive powers."

This non-explanation is particularly maddening for its use of entropy, which threatens to become the single most abused idea in science fiction. *Time Storm* is vague enough (the actual cause of the storm is "entropic conflict") to avoid guilt in this connection, but as a public service to the sf community, I want to offer a few words on entropy. For the record, entropy is a concept of thermodynamics and mechanics. It is a measure, not a force. It is a useful way to conceptualize energy waste or to check on whether a system is closed. To use it as a cause of physical phenomena, however, is comparable to explaining the petroleum shortage as being the result of the energy crisis.

—G—

PLANET OF EXILE

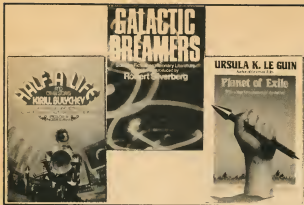
by Ursula K. LeGuin
Harper & Row, \$7.95

Reviewed by Geraldine Morse

IN HER new introduction to this re-issue of a 1966 book, Ursula K. LeGuin gives not only her position on feminism in literature (just such a position as a rational, successful woman in her late forties might hold) but also this revealing quote: "Once I was asked what I thought the central, constant theme of my work was, and I said spontaneously, 'Marriage.'"

If it is true that all of Ursula K. LeGuin's work is variation on this theme, then *Planet of Exile* is a veritable fugue. She presents a hero (Agat), a heroine (Rolery), a planet (Gamma Draconis III), and the union of all three.

Rolery is a h.i.l.f. (highly intelligent life form) of a semi-civilized tribe indigenous to Gamma Draconis III. Agat is a farborn, one of the 1,500 descendants of a group of aliens stranded on the planet long ago—so, long that the farborns have forgotten much of their heritage, if not their sense of alienation. When Rolery and Agat



marry (after surmounting the usual prejudices), theirs is not only a marriage of male and female, but also a joinder of two species, of alien and native, and even a marriage of minds, for Agat discovers in Rolery an aptitude for telepathy like his own. Furthermore, they join together Rolery's tribe and the inbred exiles in a fight against the dangers of war and winter which threaten them both.

As always, in *Planet of Exile*, Ursula K. LeGuin is more concerned with the interactions among these entities than by any parapernalia they may tote around which makes them "science fiction." In keeping with this interest, *Planet of Exile* has no lexicon of alien terminology, no mail-order catalog descriptions of space-age impedimenta, not even a single nostalgia character with tentacles instead of toes.

Gamma Draconis III is a planet of four seasons a year, but there are 24,000 days in that year, and winter lasts for 6,000 of them. When Rolery and Agat first meet, winter is just beginning, and the hills and the farborns reluctantly join to protect themselves against the warrior hordes migrating south. This struggle over, *Planet of Exile* ends as the two peoples turn united to a harder struggle against the 16-year long winter itself.

The book is not complex, but moves classically from a tale of individual love to the story of a people, as the exhausted exiles finally embrace the planet as their own, and its future as theirs. Rolery and Agat lack the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Planet of Exile* is neither a great love story nor a great

epic; it is a simple story, well told. Nothing ever rings discordant, in character or in plot, and nowhere else in science fiction is there the consistently good writing found in Ursula K. LeGuin. But *Planet of Exile*, however pleasant, fails to capture and inflame the imagination as does LeGuin's later *Lathe of Heaven*, and its limited scope cannot provide the intellectual excitement of a *Left Hand of Darkness*. One of her earliest books, *Planet of Exile* is interesting not only as a classic Alexander and Roxana transposed to the future, but as one of the first strokes in the forging of Ursula K. LeGuin's exceptional body of work.

—G—

HALF A LIFE AND OTHER STORIES

by Kiril Bulychev

translated by Helen Saltz Jacobson

Macmillan, \$7.95

Reviewed by Patrick L. McGuire

BULYCHEV" IS a pseudonym, and the writer behind it started out signing his first name K-I-R-period. This was presumably an abbreviation for Kiril, but then Bulychev realized that "Kir" is itself a perfectly good Russian name, though not a very common one. And he knocked off the period. Now he's just Kir Bulychev. (Macmillan hasn't caught up with him yet, you'll note.) This same sort of whimsical attitude toward commonplaces is characteristic of much of Bulychev's science fiction, too. In our exceptional moods we talk about sf as a

"literature of ideas," but in our more sober moments we recognize that most science fiction consists instead of variations on themes set previously. All of the stock situations in this collection of stories have appeared before (though some of them are more common in Soviet sf than they are over here), but Bulychev brings something fresh to each of them.

The title novelette, "Half a Life," uses a "dreadful mistake" situation fairly common in Soviet sf. Here, a malfunctioning interstellar robot probe kidnaps an Earthwoman, and also intelligent beings from a second planet. Soviet ideology holds that social progress parallels technological progress, and that interstellar war is virtually impossible. Accordingly, many Soviet writers have used some such "dreadful mistake" merely to stand in for hostile aliens. But Bulychev makes active use of the lack of rational intention. Natasha Sidorova's heroism is contrasted with the lack of significance which it has for the rest of the universe. Natasha never even comes up against a flesh-and-blood opponent, and her story is only a curiosity to her descendants.

"May I Please Speak to Nina" uses a telephone connection through time (not a common gimmick, but not an original one, either) to draw a contrast between the blacked-out, war-ravaged Moscow of 1942 and the relatively prosperous city of 1972.

The stock situation in "I Was the First to Find You," is common in both English-language and Russian sf. The crew of a starship set out on a slower-than-light trip, only to find on arrival that FTL has been invented in the meantime. Van Vogt perhaps originated this one in 1944 with "Far Centaurus." Just so the reader knows Bulychev knows the idea itself isn't new, the author includes a few sentences easily recognizable as a swipe from a Strugatsky story. Bulychev's personal slant on this stock situation is the moral contrast between the heroism of the explorers and the banality of their twenty-second-century welcoming committee. And even that doesn't sound very novel in outline—it sounds indeed much like Heinlein's *Time for the Stars*. The freshness of Bulychev's tale resides somehow in the very telling. I had, in fact, previously read several of these stories in the Russian without realizing quite how good they were. They are low-key and depend on the evocation of mood, and they suffer heavily in the

estimation of a foreign reader who must keep part of his attention on vocabulary and grammar. I don't now have the originals on hand for comparison, but save for minor quibbles, Helen Saltz Jacobson's translation seems entirely adequate.

"Snowmaiden" is about lovers separated by physiological incompatibility—a little like Anderson's "Starfog," but told more economically and lyrically. The science here is slightly "harder" than in most of Bulychev's sf, and that is all to the good. Theodore Sturgeon's introduction to this collection celebrates the "human element in science fiction," which is fair enough, but only half the picture. "Hard science" is often an excellent vehicle for a human story.

"Red Deer, White Deer" uses the gimmick of Capek's *R.U.R.* One species wipes out another, only to end by assuming its attributes. But Bulychev inverts Capek's moral, and the perspective from which we see the story (xenarcheological and xenological research) is novel. The only comic story in the collection is "Protest." The gimmick (undisclosed here since it forms the punch line) seems new to sf, but it's neither plausible enough to be funny-clever, nor quite postposterous enough to be funny-outrageous. Bulychev has written much better comedy—such as a story about an alien trying to get his flying saucer repaired in Moscow—and I think "Protest" was a poor choice for inclusion here.

"The First Layer of Memory" belongs to an odd Soviet category of stories about doubles, memory-transfers, and so forth. Their oddness comes not from this idea itself, but from what to me seems a pointless and illogical development of it. In this example, a character receives a memory transfer, jumps out of a hospital bed and does irrational things that neither his original self nor his memory-donor would, and then finally gets his head(s) together again. Yet Sturgeon calls this story "intriguing and most suspenseful." Evidently Bulychev is doing something I'm not attuned to, and I can't say whether he does it well or not.

My tally is thus one incomprehensible story, one unfunny one, and five others ranging from good to excellent. That's an enviable score. The only thing stopping from recommending this book without reservation is the price, \$7.95 for 142 pages of large sans serif type. The Strugatskys' *Roadside Picnic*

in the same series has 245 pages of smaller type for one dollar more. Other Bulychev stories are as good as the ones collected here. It would be a shame if this book should fail commercially just because librarians or readers felt they were not getting enough wordage for their money.

—G—

GALACTIC DREAMERS

edited by Robert Silverberg
Random House, \$8.95

GALACTIC EMPIRES:

Volumes I and II
Edited by Brian Aldiss
St. Martin's, \$8.95 each

Reviewed by Floyd Kemske

OUTSIDERS MIGHT be surprised to learn how many answers there are to the question, "What is science fiction?" The truth is, there are almost as many answers as there are sf readers. Certainly there are as many answers as there are sf anthology compilers. You cannot get much more earnest, for example, than Robert Silverberg's *Galactic Dreamers*, which is subtitled, "Science Fiction as Visionary Literature." Brian Aldiss, however, brings another aspect of the genre to our attention, writing "galactic empires represent the ultimate absurdity in science fiction." If diversity is a sign of health in the genre, then we should rejoice at the appearance of these two anthologies: the timeless beside the nostalgic, the reverent beside the comic. Yet the similarities of these two books extend beyond the word "galactic" in their titles.

Both of these collections are concerned with the impractical. Nobody would dispute this in the case of stories about galactic empires (well, almost nobody). And to be visionary is to be impractical, by definition. It is not precisely the same kind of impracticality in each case, however. On one hand, it is the imaginative vision of John W. Campbell's 1935 story, "Night," in which the hero visits the frozen, virtually energyless, end of time in our solar system. On the other hand, Alfred Coppel's 1950 adventure, "The Rebel of Valkyr," with its horses in the hold of the spaceship and the oil lamps smoking from the vessel's walls, strives for a different sort of craziness. The dif-

ference between these two stories represents the difference between the two anthologies.

There are three authors who turn up in both collections, however, which presumably is another point of similarity. Well, you might expect R.A. Lafferty to appear in a collection devoted to visionary literature, as he does with the 1971 story, "Sky," an item which seems to be about a group of friends who get hold of a bad batch of a hallucinogenic. Brian Aldiss uses him with "Been a Long Time" (a 1969 story in which a fantastic sort of immortal being is punished by his colleagues in having to supervise six monkeys at six typewriters while they randomly strive to reproduce the works of Shakespeare—"The Blackstone Readers' Edition") to establish a sense of perspective regarding the physical and temporal dimensions of a galactic empire. The second author common to both is James Blish, selected by Silverberg ("Common Time"—1953) for his portrayal of the completely alien conditions faced by the first survivor of faster-than-light travel, who finds that his own time sense does not alter when he encounters the temporal Lorentz transformation. Aldiss uses Blish's "Beep" (1954), a utopian piece on the side effects (scientific and political) of the Dirac transmitter, an instantaneous-communication device vital to the governance of interstellar empire. If you haven't already guessed who is the third author common to both collections, it is "Cordwainer Smith": "The Dead Lady of Clown Town" (1964) in *Galactic Dreamers* and "The Crime and Glory of Commander Suzdal" (1964) in *Galactic Empires*. He seems very much at home in both collections, as divergent as they are in intent, and I'm not entirely sure what that says about him (except maybe what is too much to write about here).

The fiction of both Brian Aldiss (the 1958 classic, "Incentive," which explains lemmings as the receptacles for an alien parasite, tragically choosing the wrong progenitor in its prehistoric search for a host species destined to develop intelligence) and Robert Silverberg ("Breckenridge and the Continuum" from 1973, a narrative of a stockbroker who is temporally dislocated and supplies his new time with an oral history and mythology from his imperfect memory of the legends of western culture) appears in *Galactic Dreamers*. Their inclusion is not

[Continued on page 94]

Inquisition

Letters

already have been discovered and dismantled. No forest, no story.

4) "The old lady botanist seems to know a lot about current 'chimer' studies." Information from her miner friend, obviously.

5) "Electronics are most of her needs? Any bank I know of would have arrested that miner long ago." Really? You know nothing of the miner's bank account. Why assume he's poor or creditless... or that electronics cost so much at the date of the story?

6) "Is Freia an unusual horse, who believes in virgin birth?" No. Katie is a scientist. As she states, the wagon her horse pulls satisfies her transportation requirements. Her horse is getting old, ergo, it's time to prepare a new one to take over. Horses are large animals. Much simpler to transport a little sperm and run a quick artificial insemination. Farmers do it all the time today.

I think that about covers it. You might ask, why not include all the above explanations? Answer: they'd slow up the story. When you find something which looks unreasonable, search for a possible explanation before using it as a chance to jump on an author. Find something inexplicable and then mention it.

Alan Dean Foster
Big Bear Lake, CA

Exactly. Δ Ed.

Dear Sirs,

In the "Pro-File" column of *Galileo* (#4) you mentioned that Jacqueline Lichtenberg fans published a newsletter titled *Ambrov Zeor*. Could you please tell me where to write to subscribe to this newsletter?

M.J. Pittman
Clemson, SC

Yes. Write *Ambrov Zeor* c/o Anne Golar, 30 S. Cole Ave., Spring Valley, NY 10977.—Ed.

Dear Mr. Ryan,

Congratulations on your sixth issue. I have watched with much satisfaction the continued improvement of *Galileo* since it's conception.

Until now I have found myself in agreement with the views expressed in your review and editorial columns, but I must take issue with David Johns' review of *Damnation Alley*.

In content, characterization, and pacing, this movie establishes new lows in the art of cinematography. Being a musician with some appreciation of subtlety, I found the film-score to be

overbearing in the most negative sense.

In rereading the review, it seems to me that Mr. Johns refrains from straight out condemnation in the interest of presenting a more balanced review. If this is true, he performs a disservice to his readers. I know that I personally would have felt cheated had I gone out and seen the movie on the basis of this review, and I too have great affection for science fiction-type movies. Don't pull punches in the future, please.

You certainly didn't pull punches in your editorial column's critique of *Close Encounters*. I rather enjoyed the movie, but find myself having to reassess it in view of some excellent and valid points brought out in your article.

Finally, your editorial mentions the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, and its publication, *Zetetic*. Where can I get more information about this? P.S. Your "Encyclopedia Galactica" is great!

Eric Levine
Cambridge, MA

THE ZETETIC

Box 29 Kensington Station
Buffalo, New York 14215

Dear Editor,

About your *Close Encounters* editorial:

You've got half a point. I too was dismayed by the notion that contact with beings from other worlds offers us our only hope for the fulfillment of human destiny. But I have somewhat different reasons for objecting.

I'm a Christian, and therefore do not believe that salvation for man will come from anyone other than God. To me it seems foolish to ascribe honor and power and glory to a group of blue-white plastic creatures in a tiny, garish spaceship. My God is much more impressive, where it counts; in his day-to-day dealings with men and women.

But more important, I thought it was time a science-fiction reader wrote you a letter with an overtly anti-humanist bias. I have no use for the idea that men, by their own effort, can achieve... what? You never say; I doubt that you know. Your view of our future is probably an Ayn Rand-like image of well-muscled men and beautiful women with clenched teeth climbing higher and higher up a wall of sheer rock, fighting their way to the top, where they find... another mountain. There is no dream of

DEAR CHARLIE,
Thanks for the copies of issue #6 with my review contribution in it. Very handsome issue indeed.

The following is for the benefit of Mr. R.J.F. Knutson in the "Inquisition" section. You may print it or simply send it along to him as you see fit.

Dear R.J.F.

Your comments re my story "Ye Who Would Sing" are well thought out, but undoubtedly incorrect. Taking your objections in order:

1) "...any important character can change his spots without explanation." I thought it obvious that Caitland's "spots" are changed by his living with our botanist, his involvement with the chimer and what they represent, and his discovery of what music can do for him. Only incidentally, of course, there's the fact that she saved his life.

2) "It wouldn't have been hard to make Caitland something other than the great Stone Face." Volubility, distinctive mannerisms, broad expressions and gestures and philosophical thought are not characteristic of professional muscle. Such individuals prefer to cultivate anonymity. Someone like Caitland would like nothing better than to be regarded as a forgettable non-entity. I would have developed his "character" a good deal more, but it would have been out of keeping with his persona.

3) "He chooses to insist on the isolation of the valley. Useful, but not inescapable." On the contrary, the isolation is quite inescapable. Take away the extreme isolation and logic dictates that the chimera forest would

Back Issues

completion, of conclusion, of success; only endless struggle, to the end of time. This is optimism?

Of course, you're really looking for the same thing all men seek. To paraphrase Paul of Tarsus (Act 17:23), you worship at a statue bearing the inscription, "To an Unknown Mountain." It is this mountain, the mountain you worship but do not know, the mountain called Zion, of which I speak.

Do not answer hastily, but think on what I say. Has science or reason yet solved any major human problem, or given any evidence of doing so? Has the persistent striving of men yet dragged us from the pit, the dwelling of suffering and evil? You may reply that the necessary knowledge exists, waiting only for us to put it to use. But this is precisely my point; we have always known what to do; we have always had a basic understanding of right and wrong, and of our duties to each other. This knowledge has been available to the members of every human society since time began. Why is it never used, even now?

Science cannot tell us, nor can unaided reason. But the Bible does tell us. Long ago, it explained the whole problem of mankind with astonishing precision, and consequently has been ignored by most of mankind ever since.

This book not only tells us the "why" of our predicament, but also the "how" of our escape. And God's way out has nothing to do either with chandeliers-spaceships or short-lived human cunning. The word, Mr. Editor, is Christ.

Hiawatha Bray

Chicago, IL

P.S. Don't get the wrong idea... I love your magazine!

Everyone chooses their own mountains to climb. If one is to adopt a Christian premise, then it should also be remembered we are born with the will and the wherewithal to reach those peaks. In other words, God helps those who help themselves. Glad you like Galileo.—Ed.

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Telescope

Our future

A.E. Van Vogt interviewed in our next issue.

GEORGE BRINSWELL was feeding the pigeons one afternoon when a creature with sea shell ears materialized alongside of him on the park bench. The creature leaned back and rested its long, scaled arms along the back of the park bench. It crossed its rubbery apparently kneeless legs and surveyed the indifferent pigeons with complacency.

"Nice place. Come here often?"

—Cultivation by Rich Brown



Photo credit: Christian Gossiguan

"Williamson is fairly sure that he invented the term 'humanoid' as a noun. It isn't the only word he has added to science fiction's vocabulary. There is 'terraform,' and of course 'contraterrene.' He also popularized the use of 'android' for a synthetic human and coined the term 'psion' as a non-mass particle of mental impulse. All are so much a part of sf terminology that it is hard to accept that someone invented them."

—*Pioneer Behind the Pen: A Look at 50 Years of Jack Williamson*
by Mike Ashley

"Feeling slightly foolish, Peter slipped the goggles down over his glasses. The office became a dream-duplicate of itself. The desk lamp still glowed, illuminating the room with a paler whiteness than before. The heating pipes glowed like a fluorescent lamp behind the baseboard. He shut off the lamp and its heat faded very slowly. His right hand shone with a ghostly light of its own. It was three o'clock in the morning, and Peter Wharton was ready to stalk the silver man."

—*The Silver Man* by John Kessel

[Continued from page 91]

Reviews

surprising. Silverberg is open about the value he places on the visionary and it is natural he would be writing it as well as reading it, while Aldiss has always been inclined toward the fanciful.

The remaining stories in *Galactic Dreamers* are visionary explorations of human motivation. "The New Prime" (1951) is Jack Vance's speculation on the selection of a political leader with the courage, strength, and compassion sufficient to "coordinate the complex business of the galaxy." And "The Waiting Grounds" (1959) by J.G. Ballard makes palpable a man's capacity for self-denial in the cause of discovering answers to basic cosmological questions.

There isn't space enough to write

about the rest of the stories in *Galactic Empires*. Aldiss has compiled an exhaustive survey, comprising twenty-six stories and a fairly broad range of quality. He has organized them by theme, and some of the better known authors include Arthur C. Clarke, Poul Anderson, Isaac Asimov, Clifford Simak, A.E. Van Vogt, and Frederic Brown. I think the range of authors indicates the traditional appeal of the empire idea. Committed to finishing off this sub-subgenre, Aldiss provides here a demonstration of the prerequisites, implications, beginnings, ending, humor, fun, and even tediousness of galactic empire. There is nothing left to say on the subject which is not said by the stories themselves, Aldiss's introductions and epilogue, and the accompanying original magazine blurbs.

While the stories are well-organized and fun to read (is it paradoxical to feel a sense of nostalgia reading science fiction?), I think the normal reader's interest might begin to flag toward the end of Volume II. It is no criticism of Aldiss to say he has selected dated material. He knows what he is doing. The collection entertains incidentally; its primary purpose is to preserve something which is important. I would not particularly want to see either of these books serve as sf's ambassador to the "mainstream" by itself. Those people out there probably think we are crazy enough as it is. Each of these books is a different part of the elephant, so to speak, and makes no pretense of giving a representation of anything more than a trend in a diverse literature.

—G—

Telescope/Reviews

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FRANK HERBERT's account of the *Dune* trilogy is an interesting one: it seems the work is an idea which found a story.

The story surfaced when he was sent to Florence, Oregon, by a newspaper editor; he was assigned an article on work the US Department of Agriculture was doing there to control coastal sand dunes. The idea, however, had haunted him for quite some time. Herbert calls this idea "the superhero syndrome" and feels an understanding of his theory is essential to an understanding of *Dune*.

Put simply, the theory holds that the only effect superheroes or messiahs can have on human societies is a disastrous one. This is not so because of any attribute of the hero himself, who might even be infallible; rather, Herbert believes that men who turn over their powers of judgment to a messiah (and hence, responsibility for their actions) find it impossible to recall them once the messiah is gone. "Fallible mortals" cannot fill the vacuum left by the messiah. The author asks, "What better way is there to destroy a society?"

But what makes superheroes? And why do people flock to them? At the bottom of this, Herbert insists, is the "human faculty for wishful thinking... Never underestimate the power of the human mind to believe what it wants to believe, no matter what the conflicting evidence." In other words, men tire of being responsible for themselves; they look for heroes, and manage to find them. "The arrogant are, in part, created by the meek."

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Frank Herbert

